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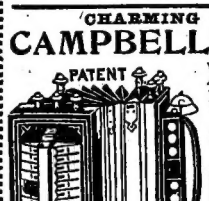

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Short Stories

No. 692.] [One Penny.

For the Week ending April 5th, 1902.

Luck of a Lover.

A Charming Romance of the Welsh Coast.

By R. Norman Silver.

CHAPTER I.
What the Sea Held.

"But, my dear child, you can't spend the rest of your days in this wilderness just because old Neptune chose to fling you ashore here eighteen years ago. Olwen sweetheart, little woman, you must say 'Yes'—you must indeed."

The girl addressed did not avail herself of the pathetic pause which gave her an opportunity of replying. Her small strong palm lay on the wooden bar of the rough wicket that closed the path to the singled-storeyed stone cottage at her back, her fingers were alternately contracting and relaxing in a nervous indecision.

She was a true Welshwoman, fair-skinned, grey-eyed, with tresses of dazzling gold—not the pale gold of the Saxon blonde, but the red gold which glistens when the light catches it, like spun threads of the metal itself. Of medium height, her slender figure made her seem taller than she was, and her slightly abbreviated skirts revealed a foot and ankle as delicate as they were vigorous.

"It isn't as if I wanted to whisk you off immediately," grumbled her petitioner, "of course I understand that your fostermother must be thought of. But she is failing fast, and soon you will be left alone. Will you not let me come for you then, Olwen?"

Olwen Griffiths gazed tremulously into the dull April sky at the end of the short street, whose scattered dwellings ran down towards the beach and ebbing tide. From either point of the tiny haven below swept off the picturesque, if somewhat flat, western coast of the Lleyn peninsula, the southern projection of Carnarvonshire. Against the sullen horizon beyond, there rose the distant profile of Anglesey, that remote island corner of Wales, across which the mail trains plunge to Holyhead. Between, the waters of Carnarvon Bay slept under the late noon.

A sigh broke suddenly from the girl's lips.

"If I could only be certain that I am the right kind of a wife for you!" she murmured, "I am no better than the daughter of a working-man and you are a gentleman with your way to make in the world. What if I were to be a hindrance instead of a help to you!" The speaker's English was musical and correct, though touched with a suspicion of her native accent.

The other drew to his side the fishing-reel that was slung behind him, tossed into it the frame and sea-line, with whose hooks and sinkers he had been trifling, and seized the reluctant hands of Olwen Griffiths.

"I am the one possible judge of that," he answered. "Even when I am able to offer you a home and a living I shall still be far from becoming rich. My father was foolish enough, dear, to bring me up an honest man and to have me trained as a mining engineer. It's an overcrowded profession, Olwen, and the only room in it for the scrupulous is at the top of the tree—a tree that takes a lot of climbing. So that for a considerable part of his life I expect Edmund Anderson, M.I.C.E., will have to be devoutly thankful for such a thrifty little partner as yourself."

He was very much in earnest, was Edmund Anderson, as he leant, a robust young Englishman, upon the wicket that separated Olwen Griffiths and himself. His sallow complexion—sallow even under its tan—suggested that he had experienced some of the disadvantages of the tropics.

"Won't you confess at least that you care for me, Olwen?" he begged. "Don't be cruel, dear!—my stay at Porth Dinas is nearly ended, your sea-breezes have

driven the last vestiges of malaria from my constitution, and I must be on the track of some more profitable occupation than that of pulling together Sir David Ellis' one-horse granite quarry. Shattered by fever and out of harness, I snapped at the job when it presented itself, and, as a consequence, met you, you wonderful little Welshwoman. But I mustn't stop too long out of the busy world or I shall be forgotten. When I go darling, let me take your promise with me—it will bring me luck."

The engineer tried to scan the face of his companion, but Olwen had averted it.

"Have you never heard of the lover's luck?" pursued Edmund Anderson, endeavouring to control the desperate anxiety with which he was awaiting yet seeking to postpone, her all-important decision. "Out in Brazil—I was copper-mining there a year or two ago—we had a fellow who used to sing a rousing song about it. I always remember the words of the chorus—they were the best part of the song:

"What though the wooer's hot head there should cover
A crown of gold or a fustian cap,
The luck of a lover, the wide world over,
Is the best from Fortune's lap."

Olwen laughed nervously and released her tremulous hands, he strove vainly to retain them in his own.

"I—I suppose I can't stop your being my—my lover," she faltered, "so you should get the luck in any case. But, oh!" she interrupted herself, "ought I to let you marry someone without even a name of their own? I'm not Olwen Griffiths, I don't know who I am, only that I'm Welsh."

"Yes, by Jove!" exclaimed Edmund Anderson, "and how do you know that? To look at, no doubt, you're as Welsh as Snowdon. But it may be an optical illusion!"

"Oh, no!" said Olwen, "I don't expect I was born in Wales, but that doesn't prevent my being Welsh! And when they brought me round on that terrible night, after mother and I had been dragged out of the water down in the Bay yonder, I began to cry and call for *mam bach*, which means, in Welsh, 'mother dear.' I couldn't have been more than twelvemonths old then, and it is all I could say. But it showed I was Welsh and that was why the Griffithses kept me when they found that mother was dead."

"You are convinced that the poor creature was your mother," remarked the engineer, "a lawyer would object that there was no proof of it—she might have been just a nurse or servant."

"She must have been my mother," answered Olwen, "she had grey eyes, they say, and hair like mine. And she was holding me so tightly that they had to force her arms open. She had been beaten fearfully on the rocks before they could get hold of us, but she managed to shield me—she must have been my mother to think only of that. But who she was, or who I am, and what we were doing on that big steamer from South America, I don't believe I shall ever learn."

"My dear little woman!" declared Edmund Anderson, "you don't imagine that matters an iota. Welsh or Scotch, English or Irish—you are you, and it is you I want to marry. Olwen, my darling, I have been very happy at Porth Dinas, I owe it the one love of my life. But I'm saying farewell to it next week—a month ago I gave Sir David formal notice, another day or two and I shall be back in London."

"O—h—h!" It was a piteous sexclamation, half-moan, half-protest, and it was wrung, as if involuntarily, from Olwen Griffiths.

"You will say 'Yes' before I go, dear, won't you?" pleaded the engineer, "don't deny your own heart, don't send me away a lonely, disappointed man. Life can be very bitter when, instead of hope, one has merely the realisation of what might have been."

Edmund Anderson's tone quivered with that inexpressible regret which no woman can bear to hear in the voice of the man she loves. Olwen retreated a step or two up the narrow path.

"I must think," she stammered, "I must be sure what I ought to do—I will tell you to-morrow."

The engineer drew a deep breath.

"You are a strange girl, Olwen," he said, "you love me, you know you love me, yet you keep me in torture for another day. Very well, it is your right, I will go."

He looked at her searchingly, lifted his soft cap, and moved off down the street in the direction of the beach. Porth Dinas was busy with its Saturday afternoon marketing, the sun, veiled by fleecy clouds, still showed high in the west, the ebbing tide sounded monotonously on the flat reefs that, draped by olive-coloured weed, ran far out under the sucking water.

Olwen gazed after her lover from the threshold of the cottage, then brushed away the sudden tears that had

"Won't you confess at least you care for me, Olwen?"

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blinded her and went in, the slanting sunbeams kissing her warm tresses as they vanished at the severely plain entrance.

Edmund Anderson, his brows knitted, his pulses beating rebelliously, gained the belt of shingle that bordered the tiny haven and flung himself down, to ponder the situation.

Three months before, he, Edmund Anderson, mining engineer, home from Brazil, enfeebled by malaria fever, and impoverished by the collapse of a bubble company, had met, in London, Sir David Ellis, a certain eccentric Welsh Baronet, had accepted a casual invitation to spend a few days at the latter's place in Carnarvonshire, and ended by drifting into the business management of a small granite quarry which formed the baronet's principal source of income.

It was thus that he had encountered Olwen Griffiths. The young engineer, too discreet to remain under his employer's roof as intimate and servant, had provided himself with a modest lodging in the chief street of Porth Dinas. He found himself, in this way, under the same roof with Olwen Griffiths and her widowed fostermother.

Olwen Griffiths—as she had declared—was strictly entitled to neither name. She was one of the few survivors of a disastrous wreck, in which, eighteen years before, there had gone to pieces, upon these olive-brown reefs, a long, low cargo-steamer, the *San Giacinto* from Monte Video to Liverpool. Driven out of her course by a terrific gale, the *San Giacinto* had been jammed on the rocky shore of Porth Dinas Haven, and only a rough sailor or two, and a baby in the arms of a dead woman had been rescued from the tempestuous waves.

That child was now Olwen Griffiths. Adopted by her deliverer, the then overseer of the Porth Dinas quarry, she had grown into womanhood to become the gentle supporter of his widow's declining age. At nineteen she was a rare type of Welsh beauty, but graver, prouder, colder, than her girlish rivals.

Edmund Anderson's love for her was as ardent as it was honourable, nor had Olwen been able to disguise the fact that she returned it. She would have been difficult to please had she not done so. The engineer was clever, travelled, merry, sincere, and not without his share of good-looks. Not in the least egotistical, he had never contemplated the possibility of Olwen refusing him on the ground that she, a Welsh working-girl, was no match for a man in his sphere. Yet that was what she had chosen to do, not once or twice. A less courageous man than Edmund Anderson would have been defeated a month earlier, while the engineer was merely expecting the result of his fifth or sixth proposal.

"Hullo!" said a voice near the musing and melancholy lover, and a footfall grated on the shingle at his elbow, "resting after your labours! Any sport?"

Edmund Anderson glanced up. Close to him stood a tall and stooping figure—the figure of an old but extremely well-preserved man. His costume was by no means of the newest fashion, yet had a kind of easy elegance about it, and suggested, together with his drooping shoulders, rather the student, than the invalid, his skin was withered and of the tint of antique parchment.

"Good afternoon, Sir David," replied the engineer, rising, and hastily drawing his line and frame from the basket at his side, "I was on the point of trying my luck. You wakened me from a reverie."

He got out a bait-can as he spoke and started to prepare his hooks.

The baronet's features wrinkled into a grim smile.

"Beware of reveries," he answered, "they are only for the studious, such as I. In a man of action they betoken ill-health—or—love."

"Thanks for the warning," said Edmund Anderson, trying to utter the words lightly, and baiting a hook with much care, "but you are out for your walk rather early are you not?"

"Yes, yes!" admitted the other, "I had a great find to-day, Anderson, and lunched prematurely, in triumph. I have been pursuing my investigations into the Ellis coat-of-arms and have established the connection between the dragon of the Caradoc Ellises crest, and that of the Howell Ellises. Dinas Castle was built by a Howell Ellis—I am the first of the Caradoc Ellises to reign here; the old stock died out ten years ago. Our dragon has wings, theirs had not."

The gleam of enthusiasm sprang up into the baronet's lean visage and he rubbed his hands.

"Well, to-day," he said, "I discovered an ancient drawing of the Howell coat-of-arms in which their dragon has wings, too. So the crests are one and the same. The Howell Ellises must have dropped the wings for the sake of distinction. It is an interesting point in heraldry. Good-day to you, Anderson, I must get back to work."

The baronet stalked on, his head bowed, his fingers interlaced behind him. The engineer gathered up the baited line and strolled down across the reefs that were fast being bared by the retreating tide.

"Singular," he murmured, "that a man should consent to live for no better purpose than to pry into forgotten coats-of-arms and find out when and why they were invented. However, each of us has his hobby."

With which conclusion he whirled his line and tossed it into the run of the tide. The afternoon was increasingly dull, both water and weather were propitious, his line thrilled significantly, almost before the single soft plash of the sinker had died away. He hauled it in—something silvery flapped and twitched at the extremity, an active two pound codling.

Edmund Anderson readjusted the bait and tossed the line in again. A moment passed and there was another bite—the codling were going out with the fringe of the tide, snapping at all they saw—he pulled in, and possessed himself of, not one but two more silvery bodies.

This done, he baited the hooks afresh and threw the line back. His success, however, threatened to be as brief as it had been sudden the next quarter of an hour slipped away without bringing him a fourth fish. He hauled in his line, thinking to ascertain if the bait had been sucked off by some wily denizen of the deep. It resisted strongly, he humoured it dexterously, and pulled once again—without success, it had evidently caught somewhere.

"Oh, very well," he muttered irritably, "I can't stay here all afternoon—it must break, if it chooses to." And he drew on it powerfully. It yielded and he coiled it down as it came in hand over hand.

Something glittered on one of the hooks—not silvery this time but golden. He reached to it, puzzled. It was a tiny gold pendant, rather oblong than square, and fairly substantial in manufacture. From a ring and eyelet upon it hung two loose ends of chain. And both chain and pendant were worn to an oddly rounded smoothness, as though by the long-continued action of water. Yet, still clinging to their solid setting, there

shone, on one side of the ornament, a couple of initials in minute diamonds—the letters M and E.

The engineer noticed a vague indentation on the edge of the curious charm, and forced his thumb-nail into it. The pendant gaped upon a hinge; it had been closed over a bevel and the interior was quiet dry. Exposed was a flattish plate, with a slit in it, and a bit of white silk ribbon projecting.

Edmund Anderson pulled at the latter; the ribbon unrolled, as does a surveyor's inch tape from its case. It was a finger's length deep and about half as wide. Its surface was most delicately painted in a style between that of the illuminator and the miniature-artist, and contained a pair of oval portraits, backed by a piece of remarkable decoration.

The portraits, on inspection, proved to be exquisitely done, and linked by a faithfully-depicted true lovers' knot. The design upon which they were imposed was a curious wingless dragon, with marvellous azure scales and crimson jaws. One of the portraits presented the head of a man, bearded and handsome, the other a young and beautiful woman.

The engineer gasped. The face of the pictured woman was the face of Olwen Griffiths.

CHAPTER II.

"You See, It Has Come to Me."

"You have not been down to the Bay for nothing, sir, but it is a good day for the line whatever. Olwen, Mr. Anderson has some fish, will you not take them through?"

A trifle constrained, yet her own quiet, serious self, Olwen entered the living room of the cottage at whose gate the engineer, but an hour before, had parted from her almost abruptly. She did not meet his glance nor linger longer than was necessary to relieve him of his three silvery victims which he carried. Nevertheless, their hands touched and the girl coloured at the contact.

Another moment and Olwen had retreated to the little kitchen at the rear of the cottage. Edmund Anderson stepped towards his picturesque Welsh landlady, who sat, bowed, yet placid, knitting in the chimney-corner.

"Mrs. Griffiths," he said, "I have something to show you, do you mind putting on your glasses?"

"Dear me!" answered the old Welshwoman, all the quick curiosity of her race aroused, "with pleasure, sir, with pleasure!" And she mounted tremulously the black-rimmed spectacles which lay on the round table near her.

Edmund Anderson extended a brown palm, in which was the pendant he had so strangely brought up from the marginal waters of Carnarvon Bay. While the other scanned it curiously, he opened it and drew out the painted strip of ribbon.

"Indeed!" cried the Welshwoman, "what a pretty toy! And is it the pictures you want me to look at. Dear, dear, how small the work is, to be sure!"

She lifted off her glasses, polished and replaced them. The cheerful smile died from her withered features, and she peered at him sharply.

"These are faces I have not seen for many a long year, Mr. Anderson," she said gravely, "and even then they were older and sadder than these. They are Sir Joscelyn Ellis and Lady Ellis, his wife. They were at Dinas Castle before Sir David. He was a Caradoc Ellis and they were Howell Ellises. This strange beast is the Howell dragon, such as used to be on the gate-posts of the Castle. When Sir David came in he must needs have wings put to them to make them Caradoc dragons. But how did this get to you, sir, if I may ask—you are not an Ellis in any way, are you?"

The engineer shook his head and pointed to the miniature which she had identified as that of Lady Ellis. "Does that portrait remind you of no one?" he demanded.

The Welshwoman pondered.

"N—no," she confessed, bewildered, "who should it, sir?" she stopped suddenly and turned in her chair.

"Olwen, dear!" she called, "Olwen!" There was a note of suppressed excitement in her voice. Olwen obeyed the summons, casting a glance of grave inquiry at the engineer. Her fostermother was looking from the miniature on the ribbon to the face of her adopted child.

"Have I been blind all these years?" she murmured. Then she confronted the engineer with a mixture of eagerness and alarm. "Where did this come from, sir," she added, "and why do you show it to me now?"

"I could not have shown it to you one moment earlier, Mrs. Griffiths," declared Edmund Anderson truthfully, "it only passed into my possession within the last quarter of an hour. I drew it up out of the Bay—it had been attached, by some extraordinary accident, to a hook of my line. Recognising the likeness to your foster-daughter, and knowing her story, I at once thought of the wreck in which she had so nearly perished, though it does seem impossible that such a slight thing could have survived eighteen years of buffeting among the reefs of Porth Dinas. It may well, however, have lain buried in the sand and been gradually washed bare again."

The Welshwoman gazed at her adopted child for an instant, then cried out: "The chain, Olwen!" she exclaimed, "the chain—go and bring it!"

Infected with the mysterious excitement of her companions, Olwen went out of the low-ceiled, simply-furnished apartment and they heard her mount the stairs. Her fostermother fingered the links attached to the pendant.

"It is sadly worn," she said, "but we shall see. Oh! I must have been blind, sir, not to think how like my Olwen's face was to Lady Ellis'."

"But if Lady Ellis was, by any chance, Olwen's mother," replied the engineer, "who was the woman in whose arms Olwen was found?"

Mrs. Griffiths sighed.

"Lady Ellis," she told him, "never had then a twelve-month old baby girl, her only child, Margaret, was a grown woman of twenty-two years before the wreck, when she ran away with a ne'er-do-well Englishman. Miss Margaret, or Mrs. Western, as she made herself, was never heard of again. It—it may have been her that came ashore that night, all bruised and battered upon the rocks below there, so that none of us could have recognised her, even if we had thought of such a thing."

She broke off, Olwen had returned—she held out to her fostermother a long and somewhat heavily-fashioned chain of peculiar design. Its links formed a pronounced figure-of-eight, with pearls set in the crossing of the links. The terminal links were shattered and disjoined.

"This piece of chain, sir," said the Welshwoman, "was round the poor creature's neck when she was brought here dead. Rubbed as the short bits on the locket are you can see that they are like it. Both locket and chain must have been Miss Margaret's—that is, Mrs. Western's—here are her maiden initials on the side of the locket, 'M. E.' for Margaret Ellis. The painting must be her mother's work—Olwen's grand-

mother, no doubt, she was a fine painter, they say. And the tiny gold box, or locket or whatever it is, she will have had made on purpose, to give Miss Margaret in a present."

Mrs. Griffiths took the ornaments into her own hands.

"Look, sir," she added, "this plain ring is off a watch, Miss Margaret must have carried hers on it. And when she was dragged up over the reefs—for there was a string of Porth Dinas men trying to save any poor soul that was washed within reach—the chain must have snapped. Part of it stayed about her neck and part of it was lost, to be found in this strange way. The watch being heavier, must have got pulled off its ring."

The Welshwoman rose heavily.

"Olwen," she faltered—"though you'll not have to be Olwen any more if we can find out what name your mother gave you—I'm afraid I'm going to lose you. You're Miss Western, if we're not all very much mistaken, and Sir David up at the Castle is your cousin ever so many times removed. I've tried to be as good as a mother to you and now you'll have to go back to your own people and place. And yet, my lamb, you'll find few of your folk to welcome you, for there isn't a Howell Ellis left in Porth Dinas."

Olwen stole to her foster-mother's side.

"I don't want to leave you, *mam bach*," she said, "and perhaps—perhaps, it's all a mistake." And she laid her head against the Welshwoman's shoulder.

The excitement in her voice gave lie to her pretence of incredulity, and Edmund Anderson, catching a glimpse of a fair flushed face and shining eyes, thought he had never seen his little Welsh sweetheart so radiantly pretty.

"I—I suppose Sir David should be told of our discovery as soon as possible," he remarked, assuming a casual air, "with your permission, Mrs. Griffiths, I should like to put it before him. Sir David and I are friendly and, naturally, as I found the missing link, so to speak, I am interested in the affair."

"I'm sure it's very kind of you, sir," said the other, "and indeed, you will know just how to explain it to him so that he will see how wonderfully it has all come about. You would wish, maybe, to take Olwen's chain, sir. And a blessing it is we've kept it. I did once think of parting with it when we were sending Olwen to school and it was a bad year with the quarry. But we managed, we managed!"

The engineer gathered up the pendant and chain and slipped them into his pocket.

"I will see Sir David at once," he answered, "in an hour or so you shall know what he says."

"Olwen and I will be very much obliged, sir," replied the Welshwoman, heartily, as she returned to her knitting, "it is marvellous that your hook did bring up the locket—there is surely a providence in it."

"Let us hope so," said the engineer, and he picked up his cap. Olwen crossed to open the door and Edmund Anderson passed out.

"You said," he whispered to her, on the threshold, "that you couldn't help my being your lover, and having the lover's luck. You see, it has come to me. I wonder if it will last till to-morrow, when I go for my answer—not to Olwen Griffiths, but to a certain little Miss Western, whose Christian name I don't even know yet."

"I don't want to leave you," she said, "and perhaps—perhaps it's all a mistake."

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He caught her hand—she allowed him to retain it for a moment, then darted in again. But her glance and her arch smile set the engineer's pulses beating joyously as he went down the street and skirted the shore on his way to Dinas Castle.

CHAPTER III.

Where the Luck Lay.

"The weakness of this extraordinary case, my dear Anderson, is your own decidedly singular position. I ask you in all frankness, what would the courts think of such a claim, put forward on behalf of an ignorant old Welshwoman and a nameless girl, by a young gentleman whose interest in the affair is purely romantic?"

Sir David Ellis, having completed his question, rested his chin upon his lean knuckles and surveyed the engineer. The baronet was seated at his library table, surrounded by musty folios and discoloured prints. Before him lay a manuscript volume, in which he had been making an occasional correction.

Edmund Anderson frowned.

"The evidence of the chain and the pendant," he said, "is none the less significant because it is extraordinary."

The baronet laughed.

"Coincidence," he retorted, "is not proof. You will find it difficult to demonstrate that, even if this dead woman—from whose neck the chain, and possibly the pendant, came—were Margaret Ellis, the child in her arms was, beyond doubt, hers. It might, for instance, have been that of a passenger. However, I won't weary you by arguments that, in the end, we should have to leave to the lawyers. Suffice it that if this Olwen Griffiths contemplates posing as Margaret Ellis' daughter in the hope of ousting me from some fortune or other which I am supposed to possess, she is greatly mistaken. The Porth Dinas estate is barely insolvent."

"Oust you!" exclaimed the engineer, astonished. "What do you mean?"

"Your assumption of innocence," sneered Sir David, "is almost convincing. As if you did not know that the estate is entailed in the direct line, and that Margaret Ellis or her heirs, if she be dead and have any, could claim it and leave me to console myself with the title."

He clenched his withered fingers in the impotent passion of the old.

"But the ingenious little plot which you have trumped up during your stay here, Anderson," he continued, "is as futile as it is obvious. Under a disentailing deed just executed, with the consent of the next heirs-at-law, the Porth Dinas estate will be publicly sold in London within the next day or two. Out of the proceeds I trust to be able to pay the family debts and to purchase myself a small annuity on which I may pursue my heraldic studies in peace."

"I see," said Edmund Anderson coldly; "and if you were to recognise Miss—Miss Western as your kinswoman you would have to surrender even that."

"Quite so," responded the baronet, going on with his corrections upon the page before him; "and if I do not oppose her, my legal successors will, and the estate will vanish in the smoke of a Chancery case. But, really, these are things you must discuss with your *protegees*—your landlady and her foster-daughter. They do not concern me, but my lawyers."

"And that is your last word?" asked the engineer disdainfully.

Sir David nodded, turned a leaf of his book and touched a bell at his elbow. Edmund Anderson dispensed with the formality of a farewell and marched out, indignant.

Dinas Castle, a gaunt granite structure, stood in a recess of the low hills bordering the haven of Porth Dinas. To reach the village and his lodging by the shortest route it was necessary to cross a portion of the weed-covered reefs now exposed by a neap tide of exceptional lowness. From a point near the Castle he struck athwart them, stepping agilely upon the dangerous surfaces and pondering the singular situation created during the last few hours by the odd fruits of his fishing expedition.

It seemed but too true that Olwen could not vindicate her identity except at great cost, and—if Sir David were not lying—at the practical ruin of the estate to which it appeared she might lay claim as the presumptive heir of the elder branch of the Ellises.

He gained the spot whence he had thrown the line and made that singular capture. The idea struck him to try and discover where the pendant might have lain. His line had been a fifteen-fathom one, and he had flung it towards the north-west—the peak of Parys Mountain, the highest point of the Isle of Anglesey, had been straight before him across the bay.

The line too, had run out to its fullest extent—some ninety feet; it had yielded suddenly when he drew on it, possibly a part of the chain, or even the missing watch that must have been worn on it, had been detained in a chance crevice. He shrugged his shoulders at the

It was all rich copper ore.

unlikelihood of his search proving profitable, nevertheless he continued it.

At length he came upon a slate-coloured rock, higher, rounder, and not so densely hung with weed as its neighbouring reefs. It lay in the line of his estimated cast, and he paused to notice how perfect a natural aquarium it was, with its few, gliding, diminutive fishes, its anemones, and its crab or two. But something yellow and glittering caught his eye and he stooped to perceive, in a niche of the hollow just clear of the water, something yellow and gleaming. It was a small watch, battered and worn, but dainty enough to be recognised, even in its ruin, as a woman's.

He sought to release the watch and failed. It was wedged tightly into a crevice that held it obstinately. Taking his knife from his pocket, the engineer picked expertly at the rock. A flat slice detached itself and the watch was freed. But Edmund Anderson was not looking at the little dented timepiece, his eyes were fixed upon the bit of rock he had displaced; it was speckled with yellow-red points that glistened dully.

The engineer whistled. He could not be mistaken in their significance, they were the pyrites of copper—the most frequent form of copper-ore. A thrill ran over him. He had knelt down to operate upon the rock, and was facing northwards and westwards. Across the bay he could still discern the peak of Parys Mountain—the once great copper-mine that had been worth in its palmy days £300,000 a year. He had fallen upon the continuation of the vein—here on the very foreshore of the Porth Dinas estate that should have been Olwen's heritage. He strode hither and thither in a circle of twenty yards, examining the weed-draped rock. It was all rich copper ore, and it dipped towards the land.

Some words rang suddenly in his ear. They were Sir David's of half-an-hour ago. "The estates will be sold publicly in London within the next day or two." His heart leapt into his mouth as he realised what those words might mean. Then, deliberately, he began to kick the dangling masses of weed over the fractures which he had made. The pieces of ore he placed, with the watch, in his pocket. As he did so, he touched the pendant and drew it out.

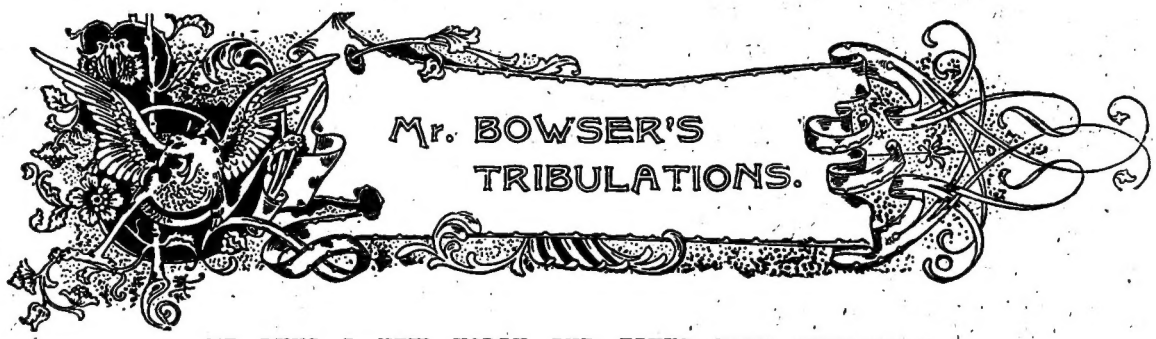
"So," he said, regarding it musingly; "so it was luck, after all. Well, that depends—on what happens in London."

* * * * *

What happened in London was simple yet momentous. Upon the strength of those pieces of ore and his personal reputation for intregity, Edmund Anderson secured the use of some twenty thousand pounds of capital, sent a lawyer to Tokenhouse Yard, and bought the Porth Dinas estate over the heads of half-a-dozen unenthusiastic bidders. In a month it was the property of an intelligent private syndicate.

Before the first ship-load of ore out of the Porth Dinas mine was smelted at Swansea, Olwen was Mrs. Anderson.

Olwen Anderson never fought an action against Sir David. There was nothing to gain by it. But the engineer has called his small son and heir by the name of "Joscelyn Ellis Anderson." The "Ellis," he is careful to explain, is not on behalf of the Caradoc, but of the Howell Ellises. And it is in honour of the Howell Ellises that the Caradoc wings have been taken off the dragons on the gate-posts of Dinas Castle, where the Andersons still spend an occasional few weeks, the engineer having stipulated for its specific assignment to himself.



HE BUYS A NEW KODAK AND TAKES SOME SNAP-SHOTS.

Mr. Bowser is so regular in his comings and goings that when he came home four hours early the other afternoon Mrs. Bowser knew that something unusual had happened. She didn't have to ask what it was, as he had a kodak with him and at once proceeded to explain.

"I thought I'd come home and get a few snap shots at the landscapes round here."

"You—you've gone and got another kodak!" she exclaimed.

"I have a kodak here, yes, but you needn't look as if you wanted to swallow it."

"But you got one a few months ago, and don't you remember what happened? All the pictures you took were cross-eyed and wrong end up, and you finally got annoyed and smashed things. What on earth possessed you to get another?"

"My dear woman, it was no wonder I couldn't take pictures with that thing they called a kodak. It was a rank swindle and little better than a corn-sheller. It was inevitable that I should make a failure. In this machine, however——"

"You've got something different?" she finished.

"I have. I can take a photograph to knock the spots off the best of them. I was practising all the afternoon, and I'm tickled to death. The pictures are so life-like that you can see every hair on a dog's tail. In a week's time we will fill our rooms with works of art, and you can point to them with pride and say that your husband did them all. I should think you would be glad to encourage me in my artistic tastes."

Mrs. Bowser sighed and turned away, and Mr. Bowser gathered up his outfit and left the house, saying that

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he would be back in the course of a couple of hours.

"You will try to keep out of trouble, won't you?" she asked, as she followed him to the door.

"Trouble! Trouble! How on earth can I get into trouble?" he replied.

"In lots of ways."

"In no way at all. I take my kodak and wander about until I find a pleasing landscape. Then I press the button. How can any trouble arise from that? When I come home, we'll fit up a dark room. I want to develop my own negatives."

He started off down the street with the ambition of an artist surging up in his soul, and the family cat sat on the steps and looked after him and wondered whether he'd come home on his own legs or in the ambulance. Mr. Bowser did not have to go far before finding something that appealed to his artistic temperament.

An old umbrella mender, who had taken a seat under a tree, had fallen asleep. His hat had fallen off, his legs were stretched out on the footpath, and the picturesque attitude would make a famous picture. Mr. Bowser stopped and prepared his kodak, and as he did so various appropriate titles for the picture ran through his head. It could be called "A Modern Brigand," "Innocence in a Great City," "Not Dead, But Sleeping," or "Wake Him Not." He had just got the camera focussed when a man crossed the road from a public-house and asked:

"What ye goin' to do to old Petro?"

"Take his picture."

"What for?"

"Oh, just to add to my collection. I'm out taking snap shots, you know. I think the old man will work out beautifully."

"But I don't think so! The old man is my friend, and nobody's goin' to play tricks on him if I can help it. Git along with that black box!"

"But don't you understand that I simply want a picture of him as showing my own work with the kodak?" protested Mr. Bowser.

"I understand all about it. The old gentleman may take yer umbreller to mend and furgit to bring it back, and ye show coppers his pictur' and get him into trubble. Git along or there'll be a row."

The man squared himself up and looked so ugly and so much in earnest that Mr. Bowser felt it wise to move on. It didn't take him long, however, to find another subject. On the steps of a tumble-down old shanty there sat a baby, and in the doorway above him stood a goat. There were sentiment and picturesqueness combined, and almost at the first glance Mr. Bowser decided to label the picture "The Baby's Guardian." The baby stared at him, and the goat kept a watchful eye as he moved about and made ready, and in another minute the button would have been pressed but for an interruption. A woman suddenly appeared in the doorway beside the goat and called out:

"Now then, what's going on out here?"

"I'm about to take a picture with my kodak," replied Mr. Bowser.

"Is it of the baby and the goat?"

"Yes."

"Then you drop it like a hot pertaty or I'll come down on ye like a thousand of bricks!"

"My dear woman, let me explain. I am an amateur photographer. I am taking a few pictures for——"

"I understands perfectly," she interrupted. "Me old man sat just here one day two months ago a-smokin' of his pipe and feelin' that it was good to live when along comes a bloke wid jest sich a machine as that. He peeks and squints and takes a pictur' and goes off, and two days later me Dan'l is arrested by the police fur stealin' four casks of cement. Be off, I say!"

"My good woman, I solemnly assure you——" began Mr. Bowser, but she advanced and punched him in the back with a broom, and he had to move on.

He travelled a few streets further before he struck his next landscape. It was a rude shanty, with a sign of "Inn" over the door, and there were a dozen picturesque figures loafing about. Mr. Bowser decided to take a picture and label it "The Home of Industry," and none of the idlers objected as he made ready. Indeed, some of them assumed still more picturesque poses, as if to favour him. In a couple of minutes his work was done, and he was about to turn away when one of the gang approached and queried:

"That was a snap shot, wasn't it?"

"It was."

"And we all did our best for you?"

"You did, and I'm much obliged. I think the negative will work out beautifully."

"What about the drinks, old chap? The boys is expectin' at least a cask of beer. We's all hardworkin' men, with wives and kids to support, and we can't pose for nothin'. Will ye come in and tell Jimmy to tap a fresh cask?"

"A cask!" exclaimed Mr. Bowser. "No, of course not. I'm willing to buy you each a glass of beer, but you don't want to pile it on too thick."

"They was beautiful poses!" suggested the man.

"Yes, the poses were all right."

"And the boys won't take less'n a cask."

"Then they won't take anything. You all ought to feel highly honoured at being photographed."

"That may be. But about that cask."

"I sha'n't pay for any cask."

The man turned to his gang and made a sign, and next minute Mr. Bowser was surrounded and picked up and flung into a blanket held by six men. Before he could even yell out he was being tossed in the air, and for the next ten minutes he performed more gyrations than he thought it possible for a human being to go through with.

When the men were weary he was spilt out of the blanket, the fragments of the camera were handed to him, and he was started up the road. His back was covered with grass and dirt, his hat knocked in, his whole appearance dilapidated, and there was a look of terror in his eyes, and he couldn't keep his chin still.

A number of boys followed him as "a living curiosity," and now and then a pedestrian asked him what had happened, but he made a bee line for home and finally shut his front door behind him. All he brought back with him was one piece of the kodak frame. As he stood before Mrs. Bowser with bulging eyes and wabbling chin she realised what had happened; but, like the good wife she was, she refrained from adding to his sorrows.

"Yes, I know," she quietly observed. "It's all my fault, of course, and your lawyer will see my lawyer, and there'll be a separation and all that, but meanwhile you'd better go up and take a bath and change your clothes and lie down for half-an-hour before dinner. You have evidently run across some landscapes too big for your artistic temperament and had a bad time of it."

And Mr. Bowser went upstairs without a word in reply.

M. Quad.

[Next week: He Acts as an Arbitrator.]

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SECOND WEEK. **START TO-DAY.**

SHORT STORIES
NAME HUNTING COMPETITION.

NAMES OF BRITISH AND IRISH TOWNS.

First Prize - - £10. Second Prize - - £2.
Third to Sixth Prizes - - £1 each.

ALL COUPONS APPEAR IN SHORT STORIES.

Below will be found ten sets of words, each set describing the name of a town of over 5,000 inhabitants in the United Kingdom.

Write down in the spaces provided the names of all those places you can discover. If you can't find all, put down as many as you can.

Note These Facts. . .

1. Names must be written in ink.
2. Only one name is allowed against each set of words.
3. When you have filled up your list, cut it out and keep it by you till we tell you to send it in.
4. You may send in as many sets of lists as you like, but each set will be accepted independently, and must be pinned together.
5. In the event of the prize being divided, only one share will go to each successful competitor, no matter how many duplicate attempts he may send in.
6. No competitor may receive the assistance of professional competition solvers whose advertisements appear in the Press. Every person who enters for this competition must do so only on this understanding, and those selected as winners may be asked to satisfy us that they have not contravened this condition.

The first prize of £10 will be given to the reader from whom we receive coupons containing the greatest number of correct solutions. The second prize will be given to the sender of the next most nearly correct solutions, and so on. In the event of a tie, the prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor, whose decision is final.

SECOND LIST. Cut to edge—>

Example:

To exclude monarch..... Barking.

11. Grain, move quickly!	11	.....
12. One who hazards	12	.....
13. Six and one trees	13	.....
14. Part of a violin; conclusion.....	14	.....
15. Ancient thigh	15	.....
16. Cheat a wood	16	.....
17. One of the consonants.....	17	.....
18. A hireling.....	18	.....
19. Adorn a stream with lustre	19	.....
20. A miry place	20	.....

Name.....

Address.....

.....

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Cut to edge—>

Baby's First Tooth.

A Dream that Didn't Come True.

I had passed a wretched night; a fitful, restless, wandering night, a night that seemed to have no beginning, and no end, only a disjointed confused middle. The most unsatisfactory part of it, too, was that all this misery had been caused by one who, hitherto, had been my joy and pride, viz., our baby. He had been a model baby, retiring easily to rest with a beaming smile on his dimpled countenance, and being heard of no more, at least by me, till the following morning, when his custom was to wake as "bright as a button."

But on this night he had dissipated all these pleasing impressions, and made it hard to realise that he had ever been anything but a whining, howling, inconsolable creature, a burden to himself, and to all about him. At least this was about the state of my feelings towards him as I swallowed a hasty breakfast and hurried city-wards, disinclined for food or work after my bad night.

How many miles had I paced up and down my room, while the winter wind howled in the chimney, and the frosty air nipped my unclad limbs! How many little saucepans had I warmed up, and stooped over under my wife's direction, while she, well-nigh distraught, endeavoured vainly to soothe the miscreant's anguish, I don't know; but I do know that more than once I was tempted to fling both saucepans and child out of the window, with such demoniacal irritation did the constant wail possess me.

Some of my remarks made during the watches of the night had led to a slight coolness between myself and the wife of my bosom, a breach that was scarcely healed when I had to leave her to catch the train. I was still too tired and too cross to care to retract what I had said, although I was fully aware that my language had been other than that of a fond parent.

She was too worn out to be very reasonable, and to meet me two-thirds of the way, which I had always held to be the wife's duty in making up a conjugal quarrel, so that everything was far from being comfortable between us.

I was anxious, too, in a sneaking, half-acknowledged way, about the baby's health, though I would not have owned it for the world. Little as I knew of children's ailments, I felt sure there must be some physical cause for his outrageous conduct. He had fallen into a feverish sleep at last, and my wife was anxiously bending over him when I rose to go.

"Kiss baby, George," she said, "and tell him you're sorry you were so cross with him for knocking that sauce-pan of his food over on your poor foot."

"Oh, hang the baby," I replied—I had just scalded my throat with some boiling tea, which is my only apology.

"Very well," said my wife, with great dignity, "then I am sure I will not trouble you to kiss me; good morning."

"Good morning," and I hurried off.

I had a busy enough time in the city and plenty to occupy my thoughts, but still this, our first quarrel, somehow haunted me. More than once I pictured the baby at his last gasp, and my wife with no one to fly to, for we had not been in England long, and had made but few friends. Until the last twelvemonth, we had both lived in Fiji, where my father was a Wesleyan missionary. My wife had rather a romantic history, and had in fact a streak of royal blood in her veins—not much to boast about, however.

Her great-great-grandmother was one of the numerous wives of a Fijian chief. She was an Englishwoman who with two sailors formed the only survivors on a raft which had drifted from a wreck somewhere or other in the Pacific Ocean. I regret to state that the two sailors were eaten, but to the woman was offered the doubtful alternative of becoming the bride of the chief. She bore him one child, and shortly afterwards died of the shame and misery of the whole business.

This child, my Kate's great-grandmother, got into the hands of some English settlers, married an Englishman, and after the lapse of two or three generations the brief episode above recorded was almost forgotten. My wife and my sisters were at school together at Melbourne; I met her, loved her, married her, and finally on my father's death, and on securing a good appointment in a London house, brought her to England.

I am bound to enter into these details, as they have a great deal to do with the point of my story. By lunch time I was quite in my normal state of temper, and long before the day was ended I got very remorseful and anxious to make amends.

I filled my bag with little peace offerings for both wife and child, and determined to make up for all deficiencies in the past by an excess of amiability for the future. I still felt drowsy, and heavy-eyed, but apart from this, all traces of the night's vigil had disappeared. I would have a nap in the train, I thought, and arrive home cheerful, good-tempered, and altogether a different creature from the irritable fiend I had been in the morning.

Unfortunately the train was crowded, and I was unable to get a quiet corner. A gentleman in my compartment kept up a constant flow of talk. He was one of those persons who have an opinion on everything, and know very much about nothing. He was what you call a well-informed man, and advanced his theories in a dogmatic style, which compelled attention, if not interest.

After prophesying the future course of the Government, and the probability of a revolution shortly, he plunged into an argument with a feeble old gentleman opposite on the source of crime. I was more asleep than awake, but every now and then I caught a sentence. Hereditary taint, he asserted, must sooner or later make itself felt. Given a murderous ancestor, there follows, as a matter of course, a murderous descendant. He was very glib with illustrations proving how evil tendencies once implanted had reappeared in families after successive generations of respectability.

I could not forbear smiling to myself as I thought of how I had an exception at home which might prove the

rule. Supposing I showed him my gentle, loving wife, whose attention to her religious duties had been a reproach to me ever since I had known her, would he believe that only a few generations back her ancestors were worshipping idols and eating missionaries with equal zest and fervour?

But the train stopped, the garrulous old faddist got out, and I thought no more of him. It was a dreary night, with a driving sleet and piercing wind, and never had my home seemed so comfortable. Kate had on her prettiest smile, and her prettiest gown, and did not wait for any apology or peace-offering before giving me the kiss denied in the morning with ample interest.

There was a savoury smell ascending the kitchen stairs, my slippers were warmed and ready for my feet. The baby was not visible either to the eye or ear. The fire was a beauty, and when the dinner came it proved to be a favourite one of mine. There was nothing for it but to kiss my wife again, and we settled down at peace with ourselves and our surroundings.

"When shall I see baby?" I asked meekly, when the first course was removed, and a delicious pudding of Kate's own making placed before me.

"All in good time, George," she answered. "I have a great surprise for you. You were not so anxious about dear baby this morning."

"My darling, this morning I was a brute! This evening I am a reformed character, brimming over with parental affection. And what is the surprise?"

Kate's eyes were dancing with delight.

"No, I won't tell you," she said, "because it is a real big surprise—something we none of us, you least of all, expected."

"Well, dear, I am content to wait. Pass me my paper, and let me see my baby before he goes to bed. I want to make things square with him, as well as with you."

It was a grand fire, and I settled cosily down by it, while Kate went upstairs. Looking into its glowing caverns, I seemed to see and think all sorts of things. What a scurrying day it had been! How good it was to come home to a place and a fire like this after the din and rush of the city! How did people get along who had no wives and no homes and no fires?

I wondered if that dogmatic old bore in the train had a home. What an insufferable nuisance he must be to his family, and what preposterous nonsense that was he had been talking about. Hereditary taint, indeed; hereditary fiddlesticks! What trace was there of the Fee-fi-fo-fum in my pretty little wife? Perhaps it would come out in the baby, who, by the way, was a long time making his appearance. Perhaps—but here the door opened and Kate came in alone.

Kate, yes; but not the Kate who had gone upstairs. What *had* the girl done to herself? Her hair was different, somehow piled up, and sticking on the top of her head. I was first going to laugh at this, but something in her face stopped me. There was an expression there I had never seen before. Stay, I had seen it before, but where I could not think, and I turned to the glowing coals for inspiration.

Fiji came back to me, and my father, and a long walk we had had when I was quite a lad. What was it we saw on that walk? Something that had horrified me, I remembered; that frightened me in the night-time till I was driven to take refuge in my mother's bed. Something that was never clearly explained to me till years after, when I was told that we had interrupted a cannibal feast.

The women had their hair done in that same wild fashion as Kate's now, and their faces looked pleased—ferociously pleased. Good gracious! even as hers did now when I turned at last to look at her again. She was close to me. I felt her breath upon my cheek. I had an awful presentiment of coming evil; and then she spoke rapidly, incoherently, her voice rising almost into a yell, just as her ancestors used.

"George," she said, "I have a surprise, as I told you—a great surprise, such as you have never known. Look into my face—well!—can you read it there—what I have done? Don't turn your eyes away, for I will make you listen. See, I am strong—strong as that wild, free chief, whose blood is in my viens mixed with your English blood. But it was not enough. To-day it has all come back. I have fallen as my people fell a hundred years ago, and I have done as they did. I am no English wife for you—take me back, I can never be as I was again."

My tongue seemed chained with a dismal horror. What was she leading up to? I tried to speak, to move away from her. Was this the end of my home, and the happy life I had been thinking of before she came in?

"Kate," I said, able to speak at last, "you went to fetch baby, and you have come back quite changed. Tell me all that is in your mind quickly. All you have done, and then let me go."

Her voice went on, indeed it had never ceased, even while I was speaking.

"You said, 'hang the baby,' this morning, George, so you cannot care. If you had not said that I think it would have saved me. I felt he was only mine after that, for you did not love him. I looked at him in his cradle after you had gone, for I loved him; then while I was looking away out of the past, from a hundred years ago came the feeling that I must—must—he was so white and soft—and you did not mind."

"Go on!" I shouted, "woman or fiend, whichever you are."

"He was very quiet, and the feeling came; and, George, I am no better than those old people of mine. Can't you guess? And now I have begun it must always go on. See, I come nearer and nearer to you. There is a wolf in me calling for more and more!"

I could not push her away—my strength seemed gone. Her teeth were in my cheek. There was a crash, and—

"Why, dearest, what a nap you have had! You did frighten baby when you snorted so. It was so pretty to see him try and wake you. Did you feel something on your cheek just now, George? That was my surprise. It was a tooth that worried baby last night. It came through this afternoon, and now he has bitten daddy with it, haven't you, my precious? Tell him you won't say that naughty word to him again, George."

It was all a dream then, put into my mind by that hereditary idiot. But what an awful dream! No wonder I snorted.

"I think you are too near the fire, George," said Kate. "Your face is so hot and red. Kiss baby, and tell him you are sorry. We must all be friends."

I kissed wife and baby over and over again, and then again after that. I looked at his new possession, and the mark he had made with it on my cheek with all the pride in the world. I have never used a harsh word to him since, though he is old enough to have a latch-key now, and does occasionally stop a little late at his club. And I have never told either him or his mother of that awful dream I had the day he cut his first tooth.

G. T. R.

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A Girl & Two Men

How the Waves Gave Ethel her True Lover.

"Oh, Mr. Kenyon, I'm surprised at you!" she exclaimed, with laughter in her deep grey eyes.

The Honourable Norman Kenyon with difficulty repressed a strong desire to snatch the girl up in his arms and kiss her. He knew that she was making fun of him, and he tried to smile back at her. She had not given him the answer which he had dared to hope for, but was her laughter a prelude to a "Yes" or a "No"?

"I share your surprise, Miss Selwyn," he answered, fingering his carefully-waxed moustache. "It is strange that I have never mustered up sufficient courage to ask the question before."

"And *I* am astonished that you ever contemplated such a proposal."

"But why?" he asked earnestly, leaning towards her. "How could I help falling in love with the dearest little girl on earth? Won't you say 'Yes,' Ethel? You must know that I——"

"It is quite impossible, Mr. Kenyon," she interrupted hastily, and all the laughter passed from her face. "I am extremely sorry that—that—this has happened—indeed I am, Mr. Kenyon. But the only answer I can give to you is 'No.'"

For a time neither of them spoke. Ethel lay back on her deck-chair, gazing through half-closed eyelids at the vast canopy of stars which hung overhead; while Norman leant against the taffrail, his eyes fixed on the shadowy outline of the girl by his side, and his thoughts travelling back to the time when he had first met her. All around them was the stillness of a tropical night in the midst of the ocean—a stillness unbroken save by the ceaseless throb of the engines and the swirl of waters in the wake of the great vessel. It was long past the usual hour for retiring, but both of them infinitely preferred the cool breeze on the promenade deck to the stifling heat of their state rooms.

Little more than six months had elapsed since Norman Kenyon had been introduced to Ethel Selwyn in a London ball-room. The moment he became acquainted with her he realised that he had met his fate. Hitherto he had never evinced more than a passing interest in any woman; but when Ethel crossed his path, Norman for the first time fell a victim to the arrows of Love. He became a frequent visitor at Mrs. Selwyn's house in Park Lane, and somehow or other he managed to meet his divinity at most of the principal events of the London season. During the early summer he arranged numerous driving and boating parties in Ethel's honour, and his love for her was revealed by his every action when in her company.

Kenyon was by no means the only young man who was passionately devoted to Ethel. She had admirers by the score, but she treated the majority of them with silent contempt, and yawned discreetly at their most tender phrases. Norman rightly considered Jack Hoylake, one of the companions of Ethel's childhood, to be his most dangerous rival in her affections. Jack was as deeply in love with Miss Selwyn as Kenyon was, and he laid siege to her heart in quite as masterly a manner as the latter suitor.

The two young men were strangely different in temperament. Jack was an athlete pure and simple. In his public school days he made a big score in the Eton and Harrow match, and a few years later he stroked the Dark Blue boat to victory. He was a cross-country runner of no mean repute, a daring rider in the hunting field, and as thoroughgoing a sportsman as ever handled a gun.

Kenyon, however, was his direct antithesis. No one ever pictured that frock-coated and eye-glassed young exquisite indulging in any more violent exercise than a canter down the Row. He was not a sportsman, and he never took part in athletic games of any description; even lawn tennis and golf were obnoxious to him. While the majority of his acquaintances considered him a very good fellow, they one and all regarded him as a mere "Society doll," and looked down on him accordingly.

For her part, Ethel Selwyn was about as perfect a specimen of the modern athletic English girl as one could wish to meet. The manifold amusements of fashionable London had little attraction for her; she much preferred the freer open-air life of the country. A tearing gallop in the wake of the hounds gave her far more enjoyment than the gayest of London balls, and an afternoon on the golf links did not tire her half so much as a shopping excursion in Bond Street. She admired courage and muscular strength more than any other qualities in men, and the scented, lisping creatures who hovered round her in Society filled her with contempt.

Although she bestowed her smiles with great impartiality on both of her lovers, Jack Hoylake was the man after her own heart. Ethel did not despise Norman Kenyon as many despised him, for there was a something about the man which attracted her to him. Despite the fact that they had very little in common, he was by no means so obnoxious to her as most men of his character; and she not only tolerated Norman, but even grew to like him a little, in spite of his effeminate manners.

In the early autumn of the year, Ethel's widowed mother decided that, accompanied by her daughter, she would pay a long promised visit to some relatives in Australia. Miss Selwyn welcomed the change with delight, for she had long wished to travel further afield than the Riviera, and make the acquaintance of cities and people that were all new and strange to her. Preparations for the journey were quickly made, and in a very short time the day of departure arrived.

When Norman heard of their projected voyage he was at first filled with dismay. The thought of being separated from Ethel for even a few months was too much for him, and he cast about for an excuse to accompany them. His health, however, was excellent, and he had neither friends nor business to take him to the Antipodes. But when he heard that Jack Hoylake was travelling to Australia by the same boat, ostensibly for the purpose of following the fortunes of the English cricket eleven, Norman speedily determined not to be

left behind, and he joined the *Valencis* at Brindisi without any excuse whatever.

Ethel was unaffectedly glad to have both of her lovers near her, and she naturally spent the greater part of her time in their company. Norman intended to seize the first opportunity of proposing to her, but he rarely got the chance to be alone with her for more than a few minutes at a time. Fortune favoured him, however, and one night, shortly after leaving Colombo, he managed to secure a *tête-à-tête* with her on the promenade deck, while Jack was engaged with Mrs. Selwyn in the saloon. He asked Ethel to become his wife, but all his hopes were dashed to the ground by the emphatic nature of her refusal.

For several minutes Norman stood by her side in silence, his mind wandering back over the few brief months that he had known her, recalling every little incident that had made their intercourse so sweet to him, and wondering in a dull, listless way how he could ever hope to fill the void which had been made in his life.

"Is there no hope for me?" he asked faintly.

"I'm sorry—very sorry, Mr. Kenyon," she replied. "But you and I are not suited for each other."

"Not suited for each other!" he exclaimed. "Why, how can that be, Miss Selwyn?"

"Because our temperaments are so dissimilar. I am what you would be inclined to call a 'New woman.' I adore athletics and all outdoor exercises, and I expect a man to be courageous and skilled in manly exercises. But—if you will excuse me saying it, Mr. Kenyon—you are simply a 'man about town,'—a *dilettante*. You have no aim or ambition in life, you despise everything that calls for the least physical exertion. London and the attractions of Society, balls, parties, and the like, make up your world. You care about nothing beyond that, whilst I—I despise it."

"But why should that make any difference, Ethel?" he pleaded passionately. "I know I am not an athlete, like—like Hoylake, for instance. But I love you and will do my best to make you happy. Surely that is enough."

"The man I marry must be a Man in every sense of the word," she replied.

"And am I not a man? Surely the——"

A rapid succession of horrible grating crashes suddenly shook the ship from stem to stern, and flung them to the deck. In a moment the air was filled with the shrieks and cries of terrified passengers. A quick, sharp order rang out from the bridge deck, and the throbbing of the engines ceased. Kenyon sprang to his feet and assisted Ethel to rise.

"I hope you are not hurt," he said hurriedly. "The ship must have struck on a rock or something. We had better get some warm clothing on, in case it is necessary to take to the boats."

He took hold of her hand and half led, half dragged, her to the hatchway. A crowd of terror-stricken passengers, rudely awakened from their sleep, and many still in their night attire, were struggling to reach the deck. Norman forced a way for himself and Ethel through the press, and they managed to reach the saloon in safety. Here they met Hoylake and Mrs. Selwyn, who were also trying to make their way on deck. Norman assured them that there could be no immediate danger, and acting on his advice, they went to their staterooms to prepare for what might prove to be a night in an open boat.

Meanwhile, the officers and crew of the great vessel were manfully endeavouring to cope with the disaster which had so suddenly befallen them. The captain was coolness itself. He gave his orders quickly and tersely, overlooking nothing needful. Within five minutes he knew that his ship was doomed. The carpenter reported that the bottom of the vessel had been ripped in half-a-dozen places. The watertight compartments had collapsed, and the *Valencis* could not live for more than an hour at most. But the captain's voice was calm and even as he turned to his chief officer.

"Lower and man the boats, Mr. Carruthers," he said. "Women and children first, and do your best to prevent a panic. Lively, now."

Then he walked to the edge of the bridge, and endeavoured to allay the fears of the crowd on the deck below. The *Valencis* had struck on a sunken rock, he explained and nothing could save her. But it would be some time before she could sink, and as they had ample boat accommodation there was absolutely no danger. The boats were sure to be picked up by some other vessel in a few hours at most. The women and children would be the first to leave the ship; but if the passengers only kept cool and did not give way to foolish fears, all would be saved.

His words had a reassuring effect on many of the passengers, and some of them even tried to raise a cheer. But the great majority were too terror-stricken to heed his words, and rushed hither and thither in a state bordering on panic.

When Kenyon and his three companions reached the deck, everything appeared to be in confusion. The passengers were crowded together on the after-deck; some cursing and others praying; some anxiously taking leave of dear ones; whilst others were gathering together huge bundles which they fondly expected to take with them in the boats. From the bridge rocket after rocket streamed forth into the inky darkness, while from the forecastle came the dull boom of a minute gun. But no answering flare of rocket or crash of signal gun came to tell them of help at hand. They were alone in the midst of the ocean.

The deck sloped down to starboard, and the officers and crew were preparing the boats on that side of the vessel. They worked calmly and methodically, as only well-disciplined men can work in time of peril. One of the boats had already left the ship, and a second was rapidly being filled with women and children. The electric deck lights had long since gone out, and their place had been taken by large oil lamps which seemed only to intensify the darkness.

"We must get the ladies into one of the boats as soon as possible," said Norman. The erstwhile easy-going lounger had completely disappeared, and in his place there stood a cool, clear-headed man, who seemed naturally to take the lead of the little party. Hoylake nodded silently in assent, and they commenced to push their way through the crowd round the gangway.

But ere they could reach it, a sudden rush of steam up one of the hatchways sent a thrill of panic through the passengers. A cry of "She's sinking!" a shriek or two, and then a rush of many feet. In an instant, a crowd of panic-stricken men and women were fighting like wild beasts to reach the boats. In those few moments of horror, men who were usually brave and self-possessed struck down and trampled upon helpless women and children, even upon their own wives and little ones. All were driven by the one frantic, unreasoning impulse to save their own lives, and they neither knew nor cared what they did in order to obtain a place in the boats.

The seamen fought manfully to drive back the panic-stricken crowd; but they were almost immediately overwhelmed by numbers. The passengers rushed into the boats, which speedily became overcrowded and were swamped. The sea was filled with a struggling, shrieking mass of humanity, who, had it not been for their cowardly fear, might all have been rescued.

As soon as he saw what had happened, Norman turned and, aided by Hoylake, commenced to force a way back through the struggling throng. Luckily the were only on the outskirts of the crowd, and they managed to escape from it without sustaining any injury.

But Kenyon saw that there was no time to be lost. As yet, none of the passengers had thought of the boats on the port quarter, although several of them were already in the water. Snatching Ethel up in his arms, Norman ran towards one of the port gangways, followed by Hoylake and Mrs. Selwyn.

"Keep off, there!" shouted a quartermaster threateningly, as he saw the two men approaching. "Women and kids first, y'know."

"All right," answered Norman. "We only want to get these two ladies into the boat. I'll help you keep those cowards off afterwards."

They were only just in time. Hardly were the two women safe, when a score of panic-stricken human beings rushed towards the boat. Kenyon and Hoylake planted themselves at the head of the gangway and tried to beat them off with fists and marline-spikes, while the quartermaster assisted as many women and children into the boat as possible.

For a time the two men managed to hold the crowd at bay, but they knew it could not be for long. Norman looked round and saw that the boat was nearly full. If they waited much longer they ran the risk of being swamped.

"Push off! Quick!" he cried. "We can't hold them back any longer."

Just as they were about to cast the rope loose, Hoylake swung himself down into the boat, and a minute later they were clear of the vessel. Realising that they had been defeated, the crowd on deck ran in the direction of the other boats.

Kenyon leant over the taffrail and waved his handkerchief in farewell, hoping that the girl he loved might chance to see it.

"That was a narrow squeak," remarked Jack Hoylake to Miss Selwyn, whom he saw sitting near him.

"Where is Mr. Kenyon?" she asked anxiously. "Is he safe?"

"I don't know," replied Hoylake. "I expected he would follow me, but he does not appear to have done so. See, there he is on deck, leaning on the rail, waving his handkerchief."

"Then he has been left behind," said Ethel in a choking voice.

"Oh, he'll be all right," replied Hoylake carelessly. "He'll get off in one of the other boats."

But Ethel felt that she would never see her lover again, and she turned away sick at heart. This man, who had behaved so courageously in the hour of danger, was the one whom, but a short hour before, she had refused to marry because she thought he was something less than a man.

At one time she had fondly imagined that she loved Hoylake; but now she felt a strange revulsion of feeling towards him. He was an athlete—her ideal man—and yet a mere "Society doll" had surpassed him in bravery when the time of testing came.

True he had behaved courageously, but it was Norman who had taken the lead. Without Kenyon, Hoylake would have been helpless. She felt that he, too, ought to have remained on the deck of the sinking ship.

They found that only three boats had got safely away, and as they had been the last to leave, it was impossible for Kenyon to have been saved. At a short distance from the *Valencis* they rested on their oars in order to see the last of the great liner. They had not long to wait.

The doomed vessel was rapidly filling, and soon the water reached the boilers. There was a sudden hiss of steam, followed by a loud explosion. Part of the deck was blown high into the air, and then, with one last convulsive shudder, the huge vessel plunged stern foremost to her last resting-place.

For a time they rowed to and fro over the place where she had gone down, in the hope of picking up any persons who might still be living. A few were saved and taken into the boats, but Norman Kenyon was not among the number. Then at last they turned and pulled steadily away.

Fortunately the sea was as calm as a lake, and the night was warm even for those latitudes. The boats hung close together, keeping a sharp look-out for any lights which might mark the approach of another vessel. They knew that they must be rescued very soon, for the *Valencis* had gone down in one of the regular steamship tracks across the ocean.

When day broke they saw that their hopes were realised and their troubles at an end. A great liner was bearing down upon them, and their frantic shouts were quickly answered by the boom of a signal gun. With glad hearts they rowed towards her, and were speedily alongside.

As the boats reached the gangway, willing arms were outstretched to help the occupants aboard. Miss Selwyn was one of the first to step on deck, and almost the first man that she saw was her lost lover. Kenyon was tired and haggard-looking, and dressed in a borrowed suit much too large for him, he looked strangely different from the easy-going man of fashion she knew so well.

"Welcome to safety, Miss Selwyn," he said, coming eagerly up to her with outstretched hand. "I hope you are none the worse for your adventure."

"Thank God, you are safe!" cried Ethel fervently, then stopped overwhelmed by her feelings.

"You thought that I was drowned, I suppose. No, I managed to escape, after all. Before the *Valencis* blew up I jumped overboard and tried to swim for it. You did not know that I could swim, did you, Miss Selwyn? I struck against one of the swamped boats and managed to drag myself on to it. Very soon I saw the lights of another vessel, and by good luck my shouts were heard. They lowered a boat and took me aboard; and here I am, safe and sound."

"Oh, I am so glad," she said, looking up at him through eyes brimful of tears. "I was afraid that I might never—see——"

"Then you do care a little?" he asked eagerly, taking her hands in his. "Is it true, Ethel? Dare I believe what your eyes are saying?"

"Yes," she replied softly. "I was a foolish little girl then, but you—you are a Man."

Frank H. Temple.

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WHEN THE DEAD COME TO LIFE.

A Woman's Way of Winning.

Unlike a certain character in one of Marryat's novels, who had been a prince in his own country, the sergeant had been a scoundrel. The day in the Indian station had been very hot, and through the middle of it the men had lain around the quarters reviling the orderly because the supply of soda-water had run out, and it was sultry even at dusk.

The sergeant had changed his uniform for a suit of stable clothes, for the sake of coolness, and was lying out on the grass in front of the quarters, smoking and listening to the regimental band playing in the centre of the parade ground.

In the beginning the band had struck up a "clog," and had been noisely applauded by howls and whistles and stamping of feet from the enlisted men, and by clapping of hands from the officers' line. Then the German in the band-leader peeped out and made him give a selection from Wagner, and growls and uncomplimentary remarks came from the enlisted men. However, at the end of it a select party of the rank in front of the major's bungalow, who knew good music when they heard it, clapped in applause, and the file, coming to the conclusion that, after all, there must have been something good in what they had misnamed a series of badly-executed catcalls, joined in the applause enthusiastically; whereupon the fat, square old band-leader had delightfully made the band played the piece over a gain, and there had been no applause after the second rendering of Wagner—only undertone observations.

A rickshaw went past, but the sergeant was dreamily watching the lights on the band-stand twinkling through the trees and did not turn his head. Rickshaws often went up to the barracks, especially after "lights out," though generally then they stopped behind the quarters, and bands of more or less riotous soldiery out of them. But this rickshaw went opposite the orderly-room door, and drew up there, and a lady got out of it. The sergeant heard her voice as she inquired:

"Is Sergeant Robert Brown in this troop?" and he jumped to his feet with an oath, and stood leaning against a tree, biting at the stem of his pipe savagely. Then the voice again:

"Thanks. I will not trouble you. Over there?" and she came towards him.

So far as the woman was concerned there was only one enlisted man in the Army; so far as the sergeant was concerned there was only one woman coming. Her hands were out-stretched, but he put his behind his back.

"Madge Vanness," he said bitterly, "cannot a man rest quietly in his grave?"

"Jack Trevor," she began.

And old Stokes, the farrier, from a point of vantage, growled:

"There! Ain't I bin tellin' ye all 'long? I knowed his name wasn't Brown any more 'n mine is. He's one o' them bloomin' younger sons what's had a row with his guvnor."

"Jack Trevor," went on the woman, "I want proof that you are a dead man."

The sergeant laughed.

"Proof? You can find my epitaph written in unpaid bills over the face of half a dozen countries. Isn't that enough?"

"Don't be silly," said the woman curtly. "Granted you are dead—and you are not—why don't you resurrect yourself? Why don't you work?"

"Work! I am working. I'm drilling recruits, and that's hard enough. It's no good, Madge," he said obstinately. "You had better have stayed away. I'm happy enough."

The woman flushed dangerously.

"John Trevor, I have come thousands of miles, all alone, to find you, and you tell me you are happy, and that I had better not have come!"

"Well"—bitterly—"what would you have me say? Ask you to marry me?"

"Yes!" frankly.

The sergeant laughed again.

"Lord, I can imagine it. The dishonourable sergeant, and the Honourable Mrs. Brown."

"Bother the Honourable!" broke in the woman.

"Carried on the troop returns and drawing their monthly rations, one pound of bread per day, one pound of fresh meat, including bone—don't forget the bone—an ounce and a fraction of coffee, and so on, and living in a tumbledown wooden hovel, and you taking in the troop washing at two and six a month per man, and baking pies, which I should peddle to the men in quarters on credit until pay day. Oh, the prospect is fine." Then, with another laugh. "And twice a week you would go in for an airing round the post pushing the perambulator—maybe a double one. One of the fellows in the troop has a double one. And once a week you will wear your Sunday clothes, a nightmare of a bonnet, and a tight, shiny black dress with tremendous sleeves, and go to church. Don't you like the picture?" sneeringly. "Of course you'd be very happy, and I should be very contented. It goes without saying. No. I don't think you've thought much about the bargain or you wouldn't make this offer."

"John Trevor," she said, "since I left London, I have not allowed myself to sleep because of thinking of this thing. Now you tell me I haven't thought of it?"

The sergeant smiled grimly. He had been in the habit of taking to his bunk and resolutely closing his eyes to keep from thinking.

Then the woman, pleadingly:

"Jack, you know this thing would not be as you say. We should not have to stay here; I have something, if you have not."

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"Yes, that would be better still. I'm the class of man that should marry an heiress—without a penny, without even a character."

"When God placed you in the world, dear," said the woman gently, "he gave you a strong man's heritage, health and strength and the whole world to live in. Won't you come? Let us go away together somewhere and make a home."

The sergeant shook his head sorrowfully.

"No, Madge, I won't do it, for your sake, not for mine. If I worked my fingers to the bone, could I ever pay those men I ran away from when the grey broke his neck and my fortune at that water jump?"

The woman smiled to herself in the darkness.

"Jack, didn't you ever hear how much your horses brought when they were sold?"

"No; I've heard nothing, seen no man, seen nothing, not even a line, as to the old life. Let's see, there were ten of them—without the grey. Probably they made a thousand pounds."

The smile was still on the woman's lips.

"Yes," she said quietly, "one thousand pounds each. And they paid all your debts. You owe no man anything."

"One thousand pounds each!" the sergeant gasped. "What fool bought them?"

"I bought them. I sent Walters, the horse dealer, up to the sale with orders to start the bidding for each at five hundred pounds. It nearly spoilt Walters' reputation, but it saved yours. So now, you see"—unsteadily—"I'm not such an heiress after all."

She had stepped back into the light of the only lamp on the company parade and taken her hat off.

"Come, Jack," softly; "yes, dear, come."

She was holding out her hands again, and the light showed the tears in her eyes. The band was playing "In Old Madrid."

Longingly through the dusk came the music to the lines:

Come, my love, the stars are shining,
Time is flying, love is sighing,
Come, for thee a heart is pining,
Here, alone, I wait for thee.

The sergeant turned and shouted over to a chum, and his voice was joyous:

"Sanders, can you tell me where to find the colonel? I want to purchase my discharge."

Overhead, old Stokes was saying:

"I tell ye, that woman's as full of tricks as she can possibly be. Did ye see her step back in the light an' take her hat off an' show she was cryin'? That was nothin' but a gran' stan' play. Nothin'. She knowed it 'ud fetch him, 'an so it did."

Harry Pollitt.

THE CURTAIN HAS RISEN

On the great drama "AS A MAN SOWS." The first acts may be enjoyed by securing a copy of* PEARSON'S WEEKLY *to-day. No more powerful and realistic life story has ever been before the public. You are missing what hundreds of thousands are enjoying if you fail to start reading at once.

A Spelling Romance.

About a month ago a young couple in Brixton were married. The wedding was a quiet one, as the bride's family were in mourning on account of the recent death of the bride's mother's great aunt. After dinner, the shedding of tears, the throwing of old shoes, and similar nuptial ceremonies had been performed, the young couple proceeded to the modest cottage which was to be their home—delicious thought—their home.

A week after, the two young people were sitting in the dusky parlour testing the carrying capacity of one chair, when, naturally, they happened to remember that at that very moment a great spelling tournament was raging at a hall near by. After saying that each would rather be where he or she was than at the hall, and so on, the turtle-doves organised a spelling tournament of their own. The reward of merit was kisses, and the condign penalties for errors were severe hugs. Presently the newly-made bride asked the newly-made groom to spell "impenetrable," and he spelled it "i-m-p-e-n-e-t-r-e-b-l-e."

"Oh, you great goose," blithely said the sole partner of his home and heart; "you educated at a good school and can't spell 'impenetrable.'"

This nettled the head of the family, and he asked her how she spelt it.

"I-m-p-e-n-e-t-r-i-b-l-e."

"That's the worst I ever heard," said he, "for a young woman who pretends to have moved in society, and been at Girton."

"Pretends!" remarked the bride, on whose cheek two scarlet spots could be seen glowing in the dark (for the lamp had been turned down very low); "pretends!" she echoed, as she left his knee for a rocking-chair, and began to rock herself vigorously and fan herself with her handkerchief. "My father never was a tailor, and I cannot remember that my mother ever took in washing."

"Possibly not," retorted the husband, with forced calmness, "but at least my father always paid his debts, and my mother's bridal trousseau, if plain, was paid for."

At this point her mother entered the room. Edwin stated that he hoped to find in the Desert of Sahara present distraction and speedy death, while Angelina remarked that though she looked perfectly horrible in black and detested veils, she would to a nunnery go. The mother-in-law, after some difficulty, induced them to tell the cause and manner of their separation.

"Madam," said Edwin, "I cannot live with a woman who spells 'impenetrable' with an 'i.'"

"Did you really do that, my dear?" said the mother-in-law to the weeping wife.

"Yes," she sobbed.

"That was wrong, that was wrong," she replied.

"So I told her," stated the husband; "but she said she could not safely trust her happiness with a man who spelt it with an 'e.'"

"Ah!" said the mother-in-law, "that is the way you spelt it, is it?"

"It is."

"Then you are both wrong; it should be spelt with a 'u'!"

"Edwin!"

"Angelina!"

Like torrents from one mountain source they rushed into each other's arms.

G. P. N.

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THE MAKING OF A MUSICIAN.

A STORY OF MONTE CARLO.

He was a dismal failure. Had he chosen to be anything else but a composer and a writer of songs it is probable that Farran would have done as well as it is given to most men to do. But he had yearned to be a musician, he had wrestled with Nature until, reluctantly, she let him have his way, and the curse of a granted prayer was on him.

His soul delighted in music, and although he wrote with surprising ease nobody bought his work, for he lacked the divine spark which men call genius—he was not even talented.

Farran was growing old. For years his implicit belief in himself had buoyed him up against constant, inevitable failure, and now slowly, with increasing age, the truth was dawning upon him with cruel, heart-rending force—he had mistaken intense appreciation for the great gift of creation. His compositions would never move the world to smiles or tears, for they were without the mystic breath of life which no man can define, and which the hand of the Master alone can bestow.

He had watched with patient suffering the cruel stakes of failure driven into the nervous quicksand of his life's ambition, confident that the day would come when on that sunken pile his success would stand at last. Now, by the light of sudden revelation, he saw what his friends had secretly foretold, that the lofty fabric of his hopes and aspirations would never rise to fly the proud flag of immortal fame, nor fame at all.

It was too late now for him to choose another profession, and he was filled with sadness so intense that it would have driven many a weaker man to seek relief or oblivion in death. But Farren was no craven. A man of morals, quietly religious, self-contained, untiringly industrious, charged with inexhaustible long-suffering, of sweet and even temper, a good friend and no man's enemy, he bore up manfully against the blow which shattered all that seemed to him worth living for.

If Farran had not possessed some slender private means he could not have left Florence every winter to stay at Monte Carlo, for Nature's earthly paradise, in the midst of which Humanity has placed its Inferno, is an expensive spot to live in, even though you know, by stern necessity, the cheapest ways and means.

In the whole of his life Farran had never risked a penny at a game of chance, partly on principle and partly because he never could afford it, but as the gambler is drawn to the tables, or the moth to the flame, so Farran was drawn to the concert-room where the finest orchestra in the world plays twice a day free to all comers.

It was life, joy, and happiness, everything to him to sit and revel in the strains of all the masters he worshipped, rendered as they are rendered nowhere else, North, South, East, and West.

It was evening, and the sun had slowly disappeared behind the mountains, leaving the sky and sea all rosy in its passing. Here the rocky peaks reflected the golden light with which the West was flooded, and there in sullen blackness stood out against the purple of the East.

The afternoon concert was over and a thin stream of

The cool air made him shiver and draw his cloak more closely round him.

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men and women were pouring out of the Casino doors, and scattering themselves at the little tables outside the café listening to the band and drinking tea, despite the doctor's warning to keep indoors at sunset.

About the last to come out was Farran, poorly clad as ever, and walking slowly, his thin face lit up with enthusiasm and softly humming the refrain of some piece that had for him a special charm. His soul was filled with the heavenly music, and though the cool air made him shiver and draw his cloak more closely round him, yet his heart within was warm as ever.

He wandered up the smooth gravel paths through the midst of the tropical gardens where the fountains play, and stayed a moment to watch the sun-browned peasants who were covering the gaily-painted flowers with matting to save them from the frost. For a moment he envied the men whose duty began and ended with the tending of those fragile plants which scented the soft sea-breeze with their delicate fragrance, they knew no aspirations, they feared no blight.

A wave of inexpressible sadness, almost of rebellion, surged through him, stirring the very depths of his wounded heart. Why should he be endowed with an ambition he could not fulfil? Why should Providence give him the desire and withhold the means of gratifying it? Could endless industry and perseverance never make up for the genius Nature would not impart? Where was the eternal justice of which men speak when all things smile upon them, where the good things which come to those who wait?

His hands were clenched, his teeth firmly set, and he gazed with unseeing eyes over the most beautiful panorama of the world.

For one brief moment so, and then with a sad sigh he turned and hurried onward towards the town, driving the unworthy thoughts away, and repenting bitterly that he should have listened to them even so long.

Over a grocer's shop in a little side street, Farran had found two comfortable rooms where the rent was low and he could have what simple food he needed.

He ran upstairs two steps at a time and opened the sitting-room door. The lamps had not yet been brought in. On the threshold he stopped suddenly, for standing in the middle of the room with a frightened look in his eye like a hunted stag at bay was a young man.

The stranger started impetuously forward, and then shrank back embarrassed.

Farran saw that he was in distress, and was immediately filled with pity, like the good-hearted, honest fellow that he was.

"Good evening. Can I do anything for you?" he said, in his friendly way, laying his hat and cloak on the table.

His voice was kindly and full of sympathy. A look of sudden gratitude sprang into the young man's eyes, chasing away the terror. He tried to speak, but, overcome with a sudden fit of faintness, he reeled slightly backwards, and then sank into a chair and dropped his head on his arms.

Farran sprang to his side. He was genuinely frightened. He had not the least idea what to do in an emergency of the kind.

Bending over, he touched the intruder on the shoulder, and vainly waited for some signs of returning consciousness. Then he went off to his bedroom, and hunted among his things for a flask of brandy, and some of this he forced with nervous fingers down the poor fellow's throat, fanning his bloodless cheeks with a blotting-pad.

Presently the boy groaned, and then opened his eye

Young as he was, his handsome face was marred with traces of dissipation, and his thin, white lips, were strangely out of keeping with his broad chin, and high, intellectual forehead.

Farran put his arm round the half-unconscious stranger, and half led, half carried him to a sofa. He muttered a word of thanks, and the moment his head touched the pillow fell asleep.

Some men would have been stirred with indignation at such an intrusion, but Farran was only embarrassed and full of sympathy for the poor fellow. When his friend Jameson came in a few minutes later he was quite angry with Farran for what he had done.

"You idiot!" he said. "Why didn't you turn the rascal out into the street? He's only come here to borrow money of you. I know him well by sight. He's been loafing round here for three or four months borrowing money from everyone. He is simply half drunk now, which is his normal condition. The beggar's the most inveterate gambler I know, and they say he hasn't put a penny on the table which he has obtained honestly for the last three years. I'll help you carry him down if you like and chuck him out."

Farran was deeply pained at his friend's cynicism, and indignantly refused to do anything of the kind.

"He's going to stop here for a time," he said. "I'm not going to send him away until I know what he came for. Perhaps he means to turn over a new leaf; perhaps he is starving—who knows?"

"Please yourself, my good Samaritan," said Jameson, with a shrug of his shoulders. "You'll be sorry you did not listen to my warning some day." And then he sat down at the piano and sang Farran's latest song with such exquisite feeling that one almost forgot it fell short of being clever. Tears trembled in Farran's eyes as he grasped his friend's hand.

"How I envy you your genius," he said, and then his voice broke suddenly, and he was glad that the sleeping man stirred, and asked for a drop of water to moisten his burning lips.

Presently Farran was left alone with the stranger. He was very penitent—all gamblers are when they have lost. He had not touched a scrap of food all day, and every penny in the world he could call his own had fallen to the croupier's relentless rake.

He gladdened Farran's heart with promises of reform; he wanted to turn over a new leaf, but his luck was against him and he could not make a start. Farran was deeply moved, and when the poor fellow said he had nowhere to sleep that night it seemed the most natural thing in the world for him to make him a bed of some sort on the sofa.

In the morning he managed to scrape together two pounds, which the young fellow eagerly accepted; he could not afford to spare much, but if one of them had to be short, well, no doubt, he was able to stand it best.

The stranger, whose name was Charlie Day, turned out to be blacker than Jameson had painted him, but, black as he was, without one redeeming feature, he had in him that tiny spark of genius for which Farran would have almost given his life.

Three days after his first appearance the young man turned up again. He said he had hunted for work and could find none, an unlikely fiction which even Farran refused to believe and Jameson said he had seen Day playing roulette that morning.

Farran at first was disgusted, but he could not bear to see one so young going to the dogs. He tried to find out where the boy lived and who his people were, but

all that Charlie Day would say was that he was waiting for money to be sent from England, and he dared not go until it came.

And so Farran asked him to stay with him, and so the strange acquaintance was continued and grew almost into friendship. The two men lived together, the one good and the other bad. No one else in the world would have stood the presence of the young drunkard and his behaviour. He bullied Farran, imposed on him, acted as if the rooms were his, and treated the food and the shelter he got as if he had a right to them. Sometimes he would plead for a little money, promising to repay every penny when his own came out, but on this point Farran was firm.

How the musician managed to share his living with another his friends could not imagine, and they supposed he starved himself to feed the other mouth, which in truth he did.

He was very happy in his self-imposed task, trying to reform the young fellow who had so strangely crossed his path. It was a new experience for him, taking a concern in something outside himself, and a little plan had suggested itself which gave a new interest in life.

He would try and save enough money to pay Charlie Day's passage back to England, and so remove him for ever from the temptations of the Casino, which had already threatened to ruin his young life. Every penny he could he put by, and he composed music, such as his soul delighted in, although it appealed to nobody else, and sold it for what it would fetch. One morning he was sitting at his desk and copying out some music, and Day was lying at full length on the sofa, and reading a book on Systems.

From where he sat he commanded a view of the sea, and the Mediterranean without a wave, without a shudder, was like a sun-pierced plate of coloured glass in a cathedral window, so blue, so motionless, and so wondrous bright.

He was gazing out watching a little yacht flying away towards the shadowy mountains of Corsica, and leaving behind it a trail of silver foam, when suddenly an idea as if by inspiration entered his head and filled him with surprise because he had not thought of it before.

"Charlie," he said, "would you like me to give you some lessons in harmony, to teach you to compose?"

Day looked at him for a moment in utter amazement. He had been begging for money that morning, and afterwards for drinks, and he was in a nasty temper.

"Teach me! You confounded old idiot," he said; "you offer to give me lessons? What do you know about harmony, you who have never sold a song?"

He swung his legs off the sofa, and got up and stretched himself.

Then he crossed over to the piano, which he had never touched before.

Lightly his fingers wandered over the keys, and Farran marvelled at the touch, so exquisite, so full of feeling. Then the boy's eyes fell on the words of a waltz-song which Farran had just composed, and which he was vainly trying to set to music.

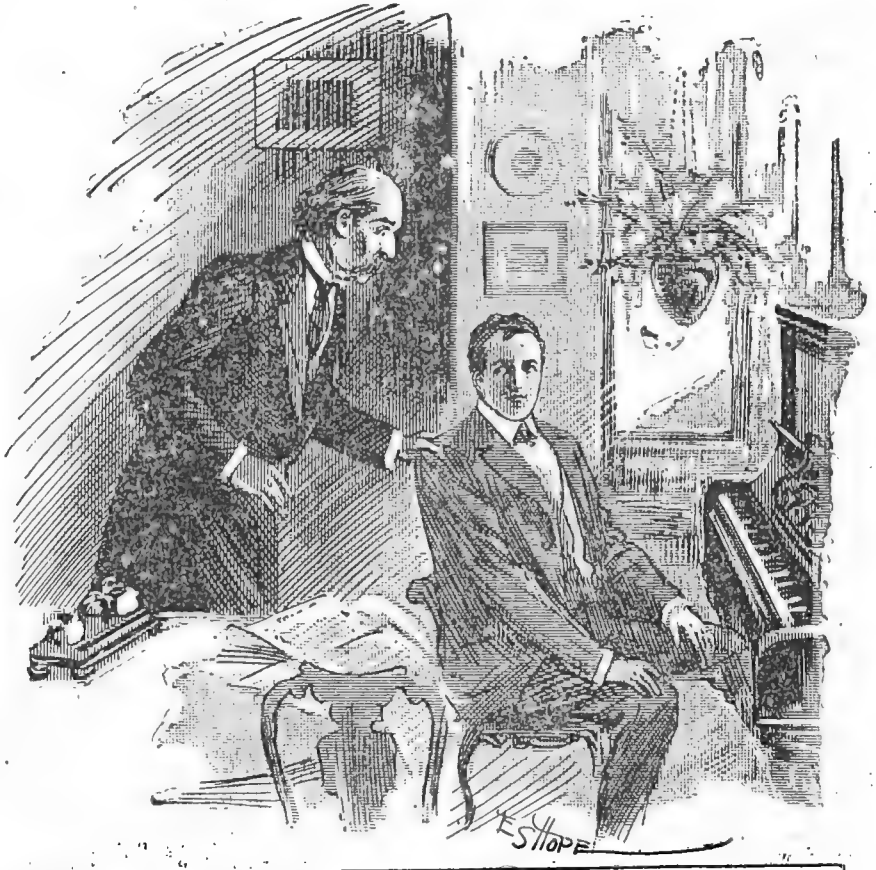
He stooped down and picked the manuscript up from the floor, where it had been thrown in a moment of disgust.

They were the cleverest lines that Farran had ever done, and they went with a wonderful swing. Day read them over once, and then strummed a bright little tune to go with them that brought poor Farran to his feet with a cry half of jealousy, half of supreme delight.

"Good Heavens!" he said, coming and standing over the piano; "is that original?"

"Of course it is," said Day with a sneer at his incredulity, but no trace of indignation in his voice. It was nothing to him to improvise a tune like that.

"Could you put that on paper?" asked Farran eagerly. He was very excited, and his breath came quickly.



"Good Heavens!" he said, coming and standing over the piano, "is that original?"

Day did not deign to answer. He got up with an exclamation of impatience and seized a piece of paper.

"I'll show you what composing is," he said.

With wonderful quickness he picked out the notes with his left hand, and put them down with his right.

Farran stood over him fascinated, and watching.

The boy half finished the tune, played it over again, wrote out what he had done more fully, and then he stopped.

"That's the way it ought to be done," he said, getting up suddenly. He seemed to think little enough of his work.

"Go on; finish it, boy, finish it!" said Farran. "It's splendid! It's superb!"

Day looked at him for a minute.

"It's not worth it," he said. Then seeing the look in the other's face, he said: "Get me some brandy; then I'll go on with it."

Farran hesitated. Then he decided that such a tune ought not to be lost to the world for the unfulfilled caprice of a wayward boy. He went into his room and brought his flask. The boy flushed with pleasure as he took it, and poured out a stiff dose in a tumbler.

He tossed it off like water, and the snatching up the pen began working again at the tune, and Farran sat at his side wondering, and occasionally drumming the air on the table with his fingers. "Capital," he said from time to time, "capital." He would have given anything he possessed in the world, and that was little enough, to have the gift this gambling, drunken boy trifled with and scorned.

Presently the score was finished, and Day covered it with the blotting paper, crossing his arms over it.

"When you think of offering lessons again," he said, "just look at this and learn modesty."

Farran held out his hand.

"Let me see it," he asked.

"More brandy first," said the boy.

Farran thought he had drunk quite enough and said so.

Day held out in his request, and, finally got up with an oath, and threw the manuscript in a box which he had appropriated for his things. Then he took down his hat and went out of the room, leaving Farran, his benefactor, wrathful and sad.

How long Farran sat there he did not know, but when the landlord brought in the lunch, he got up feeling years older than he had before. It was the bitterest blow of all to see someone else wasting those precious talents which were to him all that life was worth living for.

He could not touch the food which was placed before him, and he pushed back his chair with a weary sigh, and crossed over to the large bow window which overlooked the red roofs of the town. He knew Day well enough by this time to know that he could never persuade him to make use of his wonderful gift so long as he was within reach of those fascinating tables.

He must get him back to England, but as yet his little savings would not take the boy half way to Paris. Then the idea of borrowing from his friends to add to his little savings entered his head.

He had never done such a thing before in his life, although he had many times been in need, but now it was different.

Ten minutes later he was standing with a flush of shame on his cheeks, and talking to Jameson in the hall of the Metropole. He would not say what he wanted the money for, otherwise he knew the loan would be promptly refused. It was a cruel blow to his pride to find himself begging for alms, but by the sacrifice he hoped to save an erring, wayward soul.

When he reached his rooms again he took from his desk the little pile of gold he had saved and wrapped it in the notes his friend had lent.

It would leave the boy something when he reached his journey's end.

When Day came in that evening and saw the money his eyes sparkled, and he seized Farran's hand and thanked him passionately again and again. Once he got back to England he would return to his people, and tearfully he promised he would settle down and take up some profession. He said he had given up expecting the remittance which was to have come for him.

They spent this evening together quietly, and in the morning Farran took the boy to the tourist office and left him there to get his ticket. He promised to come down to the train and see him off.

Then he went back to his rooms and threw himself on his bed, for his head was aching. He did not repent for a moment the sacrifice he had made, but how he could ever pay back his debts he did not know, and for the present he must starve. The sun was pouring in through the windows, the heat was suffocating, and presently he fell asleep.

When he awoke the room was nearly dark. He sprang off his bed and looked at his watch. It was five o'clock. So Day was already on his way to England, and he had not said good-bye. Well, perhaps, after all, it was better so.

If he went at once he would be in time for the evening concert at the Casino, and without stopping to drink the cup of tea that was waiting for him in his sitting-room, he took up his hat.

Suddenly something fell against the door; it burst inward, and Day, staggering forward, fell at the feet of the astonished musician. He was drunk. Farran picked him up with a feeling of loathing, and carried him on to the sofa, where he lay just as he had on the first evening he had come.

He had never had the least intention of going back to England, and he had gone to the Casino as soon as Farran's back was turned, and, favoured by a stroke of luck, had turned that precious little pile of notes into three thousand pounds.

Then he had gone out, half intoxicated with the gambler's fever, and ordered a bottle of champagne. The sparkling wine was refreshing, and he called for a second bottle, and while he was drinking his pockets had been picked of every farthing he had made, except a little silver.

Drunk as he was, the discovery suddenly sobered him, and frightened of Farran's wrath, he was driven almost to despair. He got up and staggered towards the sea, then, with a laugh at his own fear, he went back and ordered another bottle of wine—and then he fell asleep. Nature can be trifled with once too often, and this time Day had reached the end to his tether. No man can afford to fall asleep at sunset in the open air after coming from the overheated gaming rooms.

It was dark when he woke, and he was shivering in every limb when he reached Farran's rooms. He said at once, "I am going to die, old man. I am frightfully ill. I feel it in every bone, in every muscle."

And then he related his success in the gaming rooms with a ring of triumph in his voice, and not one word of repentance, and fell back exhausted.

All night Farran sat up watching over the boy as he

tossed from side to side, and although they called in a doctor, before morning came he had fallen asleep for ever, muttering between his lips his lucky numbers at the tables.

When the sun rose next morning Farran's hair was almost grey. He was a man of extremely nervous temperament, and the strain had been too much for him. He had done his best, and seemingly failed absolutely, as he had failed in everything he had attempted in life. He had not enough in the world even to bury his friend, and the authorities came and carried the poor boy's body away.

Everything was going wrong with Farran. The harder he tried to live up to the principles that guided him the greater was his failure. Was there no such thing as eternal justice, then?

And that night he was stricken with the fever that had carried Charlie Day from this world of temptation.

For three weeks he lay at the gate of death, and then slowly recovered. The doctor watched him anxiously during those days of convalescence, for in his heart of hearts he feared that Farran might never recover his reason.

But his fears proved unfounded, for in a few months' time the musician was quite himself again, nobly prepared to pay off the debts he had incurred.

He must have some money, and at once, to pay his rent and his doctor's bill. Then he remembered the words of the song he had intended to set to the tune of a waltz and he hunted in his room to find them. Nowhere could he lay his hands upon them.

Presently his eye fell upon the little box in which his poor friend had kept his worldly possessions. He stooped down and drew it out from under the sofa covered with dust.

There was the precious manuscript and beneath it, carelessly crumpled, the music the drunken boy had composed.

Farran straightened himself with a throbbing heart, and at that moment Jameson opened the door.

"Look!" said Farran, holding it out before the other had time to congratulate him on being up for the first time since his illness.

Jameson took it and settled himself at once at the music stool.

He played it over once and his face lit up with enthusiasm.

"Do you mean to tell me that drunken wretch did this?" he shouted. "It's superb! It's magnificent! It'll be the rage directly it's published! Look here, old man, give me a twentieth part of the profits and I'll pay your expenses over to England as soon as you are strong enough to move, and finance the thing myself if you can dictate your own terms."

* * * *

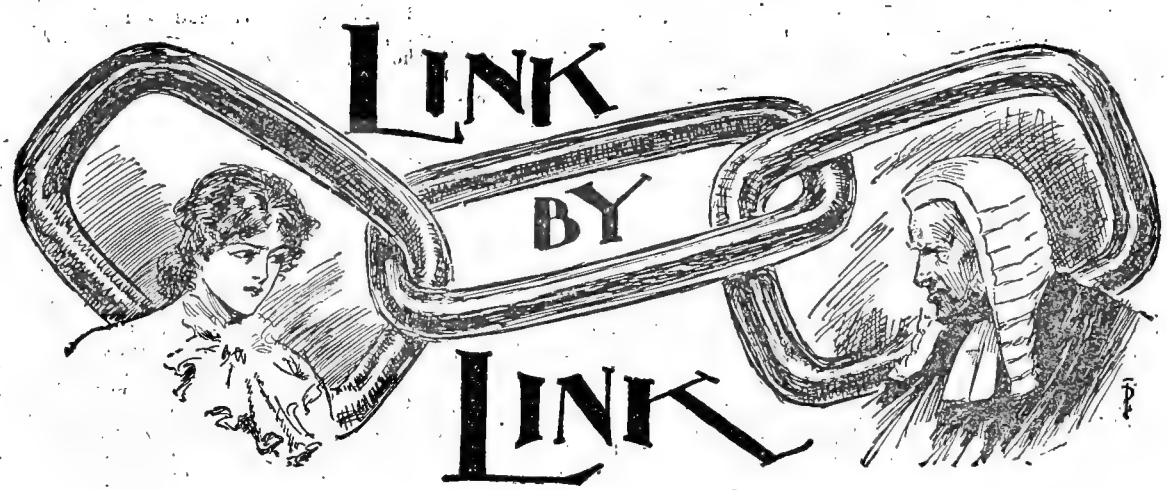
Six months have passed since the waltz-song was published, and throughout the whole of Europe it is heard at every dance and sung in every drawing-room. The musical world declared it to be the finest thing of the century, and the printing presses are still turning copies out. Already Farran has made over £10,000.

The drunken boy had passed away, but the work of his genius remained spurned and forgotten in that little wooden box to show how blind is human foresight, and to fulfil the workings of that strange law of compensation, that eternal justice which to men seemed to have no comfort for the poor musician Farran.

But there was more than this, for money itself was little to the enthusiast. While he tossed on that bed of fever, hovering on the brink of insanity, there was secretly engrafted in him that living germ which men call genius and when the applauding world called out for more to follow the successful waltz-song he sat down and set his lines to living, speaking music. such melody as stirs the heart to its very lowest depths, and brought him that immortal fame for which his soul had yearned.

Sydney Collis.

The door burst inward, and Day, staggering forward, fell at the feet of the astonished musician.



New Readers Begin Here.

GERALD MORTIMER lives with his mother at Moulstone Manor House, where Nina Penhurst is governess to his small brother and sister. Nina is out walking one day with her two pupils when one of them discovers the dead body of a man dressed in asylum clothes with his left arm missing. Just then Gerald comes on the scene and keeps Nina from seeing the body, and immediately goes off to the asylum to tell his friend, Dr. Branksome, the medical attendant there, of the discovery, and learns from him that the murdered man's name is Cordelvin.

Nina is much agitated when she hears this, and suddenly disappears, sending Mrs. Mortimer a letter from London explaining her absence in a vague way but giving no address. Dr. Branksome receives an anonymous letter containing money to pay for Cordelvin's funeral. He shows this letter to Gerald, who at once recognises it as being in Nina's handwriting, and during Branksome's absence from the room he destroys it. In the evening he goes to London to try and find Nina, with whom he is very much in love.

While walking on the Embankment after his arrival he sees a woman in a dark blue cloak, whom he had previously seen at Moulstone the night before the murder, waiting about and muttering to herself. Thinking she may know something about the murder he speaks to her, but instead of replying she scatters some sand in his eyes and disappears.

Roderick Vanstone, Nina's legal guardian and trustee, with whom she had lived until his persecutions drove her away, lives at Streatham with his son Stephen. One evening he visits a doctor in Whitechapel, whom he takes out to Streatham, where, under compulsion, he makes him amputate the left arm of a man.

Inspector Trench, of Scotland Yard, is intrusted with the task of discovering the murderer of Cordelvin. He suspects Gerald and Nina to be implicated.

After leaving Moulstone, Nina goes to stay with an old nurse at Roehampton, and one day, while sketching on Wimbledon Common, she is accosted by Stephen Vanstone, who makes love to her, and when she spurns him he attempts to throw her in a pond. Fortunately Gerald Mortimer is passing near, and, hearing screams, hurries to the spot, and prevents Vanstone from carrying out his design. He then hears from Nina her reasons for leaving Moulstone, and explains to her that she is suspected of being the murderer of Cordelvin.

Vanstone, hiding behind some shrubs, hears their conversation, and when he learns Gerald's address hurries off to his father, and together they concoct a plot for kidnapping him by sending in the evening two of their men purporting to be bearers of a message from Nina. Mortimer falls into the trap, and is chloroformed in the cab and borne off to the house at Streatham, where he is confined. When the effects of the drug are wearing off he is roused by a wild cry.

CHAPTER XIII.

A Shriek in the Night.

THE weird cry which, in the silence of the night, had sent its reverberant echoes through the old house on Streatham Hill, had, among others, the effect of restoring Gerald Mortimer to consciousness. That piercing sound beating on his ear roused his faculties and caused him to throw off, like a garment, the mental lethargy which had come upon him as the influence of the drug weakened.

He sat up and listened! No further cry reached him. He began to think he had been dreaming. His delusion was quickly dispelled, when, on attempting to move round on the bed, he realised that his hands were bound.

What did it mean? Where was he? Who had brought him here?

Slowly his awakening memory answered the questions. A man had called upon him at his chambers—he had given his name as Ned Stebbings—yes, he remembered that, and he had brought a message from Nina Penhurst—so, at least, he had said. It couldn't have been true, of course, else why was he here in a strange place with his hands bound?

No; he had been tricked! His first suspicions of his visitor to the Temple had been verified. The story of the illness of Nina Penhurst had been a ruse, a ruse to induce him to accompany Stebbings; but with what ultimate object? Enemies he had none, to his knowledge. Who, then, had employed Ned Stebbings as an emissary?

His cogitations on the subject were cut short by the door softly opening. A close-cropped head was thrust in, to be followed by the broad, thick-set form of Stebbings himself. Advancing to the table he held up the lantern aloft. Its rays fell on the bed in the corner, and disclosed the huddled-up form of Gerald. His eyes were open wide. He was staring hard at the newcomer.

"Hullo! you're awake, then, Mr. Mortimer?" inquired Stebbings, in an easy-going tone that was half politeness, half familiarity. "And you've had a good sleep, I hope?"

Gerald ignored the question; he was studying the face of his interrogator.

"Stebbings," he said presently, having satisfied himself as to the kind of man with whom he had to deal, "you have played me a trick. You pretended you came from Miss Penhurst."

The other looked innocent for a moment; then his face lapsed into a broad grin.

"Why, so I did," he admitted; "so I did. You see I had to say something to get you to come along with me."

"So I have guessed. Why have you brought me here?"

Stebbings slowly closed one eye in a laborious wink.

"That ain't for me to say, sir," he replied, "bein' only an honest servant, I merely obeys orders."

"An honest servant! Who's your master? What house is this?"

"Them's two questions, Mr. Mortimer, which I should be exceedin' my duty to give you any information about."

"But don't you know that you are aiding and abetting a crime in kidnapping me and bringing me here? Don't you know that the law can punish you very severely for it?"

"The law!" replied Stebbings in a tone of mock solemnity, "ah! that's a subject I gives yer best in, sir, seein' as you lives right among the lawyers—you're a lawyer yourself, as I understand."

There was no good in arguing with this man. His manner was too self-possessed, his answers altogether evasive, his temper absolutely imperturbable.

"Since you won't tell me what I have asked," said Gerald, after a brief pause, "perhaps you'll tell me what was that cry I heard a little time ago?"

Once more that look of feigned innocence came into Stebbings' face.

"Cry," he asked; "what cry?"

"You know very well there was a loud shriek about twenty minutes ago."

"Ah, yes! so there was!" Stebbings had thought better of his denial. "There was a shriek. Now what do you think it was?"

"It sounded," replied Gerald, "like the cry of a maniac."

"Ha! ha! ha! That's good. The cry of a maniac—what made you think that?"

Something in the man's face or voice it may have been: some subtle change in his expression; some vague uneasiness for the first time betrayed in his tone. Whatever it was, it was sufficient to set Gerald's mind on a line of thought along which it ran like a spark on a train of powder, to explode at the end with the outburst:

"Yes, like the cry of a maniac. Like the cry, for example, of Mr. Anthony Cordelvin!"

It was a shot at a venture; a shot that might have been meaningless to his hearer for all Gerald *knew*. But it was not. It went right home. It effected in the demeanour of Ned Stebbings, something like a transformation. The grin which had played banteringly about his mouth while he had bandied words with his questioner faded away like a spectre. In its place came a look of settled gloom; the look of one who has been "bowled out." His eyes took into them an expression of fury, which the man had plainly a struggle to suppress. So great a struggle that he could not trust himself to speak. For a moment he stood glaring down at Gerald Mortimer and clenching his hands as if he would like to crush the life out of him. Then with an oath, he turned on his heel and left the room, locking the door behind him.

CHAPTER XIV.

"The First False Move in the Whole Game."

Gerald Mortimer sat on his bed, staring before him in amazement.

So his chance exclamation had drawn forth a tacit admission of its truth. That was plain. No other interpretation of Stebbings' change of mien was reasonable, or even possible. That one remark had unravelled what, but a little time before, had seemed a tangled skein of mystery.

It was Anthony Cordelvin, then, who had screamed. And that being so, this must be the house of Roderick Vanstone—Nina's guardian, and the administrator of the Cordelvin estate. Roderick Vanstone was Ned Stebbings' employer, and Stebbings himself had admitted that in tricking him (Gerald) and bringing him to this place, he had but been obeying his master's orders. What did it all mean? Why had Roderick Vanstone constituted himself his enemy? They had never even met; they had never had any dealings, business or otherwise, with one another. The motive, then, for this outrage? What was it?

Certainly he had been a witness of Stephen Vanstone's attack on Nina Penhurst; but in respect to that, his evidence in an action for assault was the most formidable weapon he could raise against the Vanstone family. Fear of such a weapon as that was not sufficient to drive men to remove him out of the way by the extreme methods which they had adopted. Another motive must be searched for; something adequate, something far more serious than the obvious one.

Gerald's eyes were riveted on the dim light of the lantern as if he would find in the flickering yellow flame the way out of the maze of circumstances which enveloped his thoughts.

Of a sudden a glimmering of new intelligence lighted his eye; his brows contracted with the stress of it. In a moment the spark burst into flame; his heart bounded with excitement; his whole body quivered with the sensation of discovery. He leapt to his feet (in spite of his bound hands) with a muttered "My God!" An inclination to scream out came upon him, to be smothered by quick-following knowledge of the uselessness of such a proceeding. Imprisoned as he was in that room, he could do nothing yet. He must wait for daylight, and for Stebbings or somebody else to come to him.

To sit still was agony. Action seemed to relieve in some small measure the stress of mental excitement. He paced the room backwards and forwards for an hour, till in very weariness he sank down on his bed. The candle flame flickered, its last effort before expiring. Gerald Mortimer felt sleep coming upon his eyelids. He closed them and slept.

How long he slept he knew not. To consult his watch was beyond his physical power. But when he awoke the grey daylight was coming in through the chinks of the shuttered windows. Little time was there to resume the thoughts of his previous waking hours, for he had scarcely opened his eyes, ere a key was placed in the lock, and the handle of the door rattled. It opened to admit Stebbings and another man—Burge, the coachman of the previous night.

The entry of the men struck Gerald as more than a trifle ludicrous. Over Stebbings' right arm were a couple of towels; in his hand a piece of soap; under his left arm was an enammelled basin. Close behind him Burge walked along carrying a can of water. The explanation of these things was laconically given by Stebbings:

"To wash with, Mr. Mortimer!"

Gerald with a shrug indicated his bound hands.

"He'll untie you," explained Stebbings, nodding at his companion, "so that you can wash yourself and eat your breakfast."

A wild hope beat in Gerald's breast. Here might be a chance of escape. It was dispelled by Ned Stebbings' next words:

"The master thinks it just possible, Mr. Mortimer," he remarked, "that you might prove orkerd if you get your hands free. I'm just acting on instructions, so you'll excuse me pervidin' against accidents, I'm sure."

His hand dived into his coat pocket as he took a seat

near. The next moment he withdrew it, holding a six-chambered revolver.

"Only to be used if you prove orkerd," he added, significantly elevating it from his knee to Gerald's head. "Now then, Burge!"

The latter had Gerald's bonds off in a trice, and for a minute or two Gerald enjoyed the luxury of immersing his bruised wrists and his aching brow in the cold water. His ablutions finished, Burge brought in his breakfast, which, hungry as he was, he did more justice to than he expected. The lurking idea that hung about the recesses of his brain to make a dash for liberty now that his hands were free, was stifled effectually by a glance at that covering revolver which the alert Stebbings held.

To try to escape just at present was practically useless. He must bide his time. So he submitted quietly enough while Burge re-adjusted the bonds about his wrists, saying to Stebbings as he did so:

"How is Mr. Roderick Vanstone this morning?"

Stebbings leapt from his chair with amazement, and raised his weapon as if in instinctive self-defence. He recovered himself in a moment, however, and answered:

"Mr. Mortimer, don't you ask no questions; then you won't hear no lies."

Despite his serious predicament, Gerald could not refrain from a half-smile of amusement.

"Oh, very well, Stebbings," he replied, "I won't ask you about Mr. Vanstone, or Mr. Cordelvin either, for that matter. Only I should like very much to see your master."

To this sally, spoken in a tone of almost playful raillery, Stebbings vouchsafed no answer. It was plain, from his constant efforts to restrain his tongue, that he was acting on instructions to remain silent. Laden with the breakfast tray, he and Burge once more made their exit from the room.

In the library at the front of the house, Roderick Vanstone was pacing the floor uneasily, a few minutes later.

"Your egregious folly, Stephen," he said to his son, who sat smoking by the side of the fire, "in attacking that girl has brought us into a nice mess."

His son emptied his mouth of smoke.

"I am surprised, father," he added superciliously, "that a man of your undoubted capacity and experience, has not yet realised the futility of crying over spilt milk."

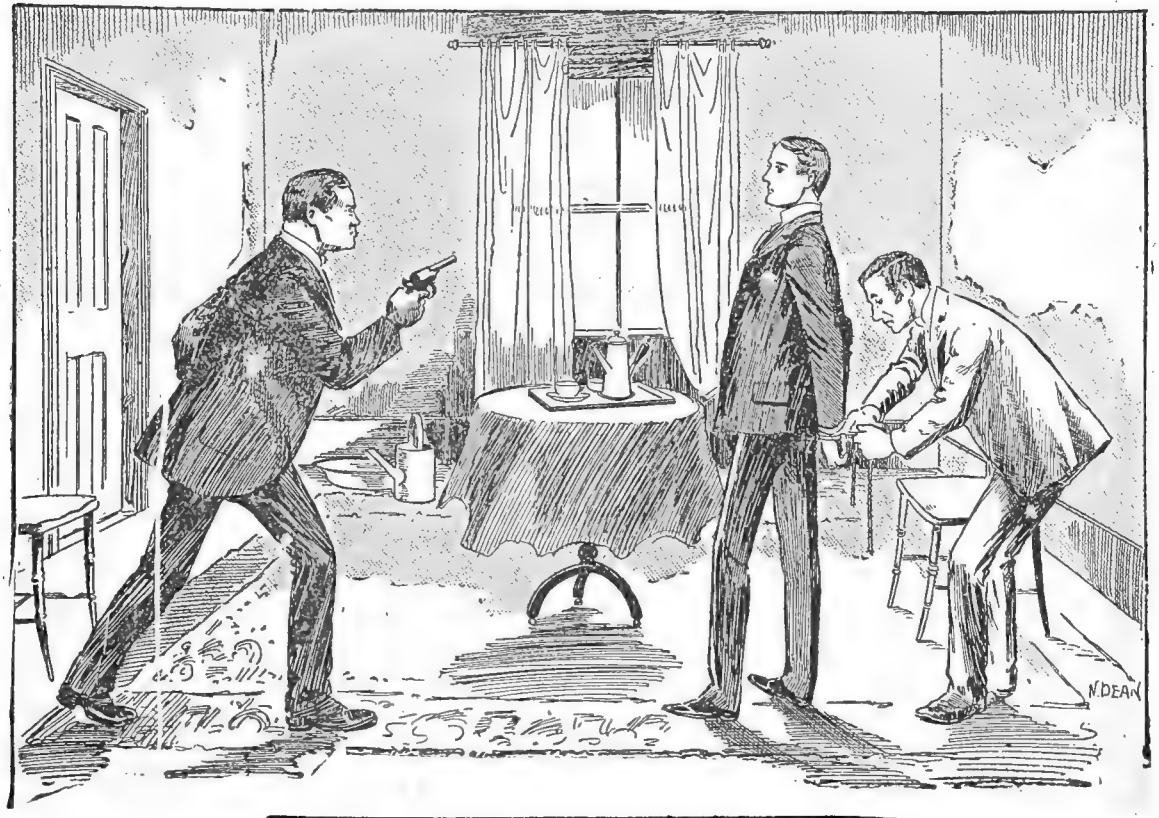
"Stephen," reproved Roderick Vanstone a little sternly, "the sooner you learn to probe your brain and think for yourself, instead of merely allowing fragments of questionable wisdom to hit the top of it and bounce off, the better it will be for you.

"I was saying," he went on, "that your folly has led to difficulties. It has made me make a false move—the first false move in the whole game."

Stephen removed his cigar from his lips, and his eyes from the fire.

"Why, what do you mean?" he asked, looking up. "What false move have you made?"

"The bringing of Gerald Mortimer to this house. He hasn't seen me, he hasn't seen you, and yet he guesses



Stebbings leapt from his chair with amazement, and raised his weapon as if in instinctive self-defence.

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where he is. I have just discovered so from Stebbings!"

Stephen looked up in genuine astonishment.

"How on earth did he find out?" he asked.

"Heaven only knows; but he has. He actually told Stebbings that that scream last night came from Anthony Cordelvin, and this morning inquired after me."

"The dickens he did! Why, he's never seen you, let alone Cordelvin—Anthony Cordelvin! He's only guessing!"

Roderick Vanstone looked at his son with something like contempt in his eyes.

"Guessing, yes, probably; but can't you see that a guess, providing it's right, is the same thing as absolute knowledge. He's guessed correctly, and the first thing he'll do will be to verify his guess."

"What if he does?" observed Stephen, "Supposing he proves right up to the hilt that you live here, and that Anthony Cordelvin is in your charge here, it amounts to nothing. Doesn't everybody in the neighbourhood know who lives here?"

"Yes; but everybody in the neighbourhood won't be wondering why we have kidnapped a man. But Gerald Mortimer will, because he is that man. He'll inquire, I tell you, and he'll move Heaven and earth to find out the truth. And if he should happen to come face to face with Cordelvin——"

"What then? He has never seen him!"

"No, he hasn't. But, remember, he was the man who discovered the dead body at Moulstone; he saw the dead man's face; he saw the body lacking an arm! Ah! you begin to see my meaning now! I tell you we are in an awkward position. I wish to Heaven I had never had the fellow brought to this place!"

The elder man paced the room more restlessly than ever. The younger puffed away at his cigar, trying to tackle the situation. But his brain was not equal to the task. The best he could do was to murmur presently:

"We've got the fellow safe, haven't we, and he can't make inquiries so long as he's kept in that room?"

The elder man swept round on him almost fiercely.

"How long do you think we can keep him here?" he demanded. "Why, when he finds that time goes on, and he is no nearer release, he'll fight and shout and give us no end of trouble. I know—or I can guess—the kind of man he is."

"That may be," assented Stephen Vanstone. "He may do all you say and more. He may scream and fight, and do all manner of awkward things, but we can stop that!"

"How?"

Stephen Vanstone raised his right hand, drew the forefinger straight across his throat, and gave utterance to a clicking sound with his tongue. "It would be quite simple," he added.

Roderick Vanstone threw out his hand in a gesture of impatience.

"You talk of murder," he said, "as if it were the easiest thing in the world. No; such an extreme measure must not be resorted to, at any rate, yet. I must have time to think. Perhaps I may hit on a way yet. Meantime, Cordelvin must have his exercise."

He stepped to the wall and rang a bell. Ned Stebbings presently appeared.

"See that the gates are locked," Roderick Vanstone directed, as was his usual morning custom, "and then take Mr. Cordelvin into the grounds. Of course, you'll keep your eye on him."

"Yes, sir," replied Stebbings. "An' I beg pardon, sir, but Mr. Cordelvin's got a new sort of notion this morning. Thinks 'e's to be Lord Mayor of London next year. I've been humourin' of 'im, sir, as usual, and told him you was arrangin' about 'is clothes."

"Very well. Bring Mr. Cordelvin in to me for a moment, before you go out."

Stebbings departed. A few minutes later the door was opened, and in walked a tall, grey-haired man with lank, cadaverous face, and strangely-bright eyes that seemed to be continuously rolling in their sockets. He walked in with a ludicrous affectation of pomp, his right arm rigid across his breast. His left sleeve hung empty; no arm was there. There was a smile of condescension on his face, and an air of patronage as he extended a couple of fingers to Roderick Vanstone.

"Good morning, Mr. Anthony," observed the latter.

"Ah! good morning, Vanstone, and good morning to you, boy." He nodded briefly to Stephen, who had risen on his approach.

"And how are you this morning, Mr. Anthony?" inquired the elder Vanstone deferentially. "Good night you had, I hope?"

"Not so good, Vanstone," replied the lunatic, "not so good. Delegates, delegates, deputations, congratulatory messages all the night—very disturbing."

"I'm sorry you're so pestered, Mr. Anthony."

"Thanks, Vanstone! Mr. Anthony *now*," he said with a slight upward wave of his one hand. "'*My Lord*' next year. You know about it? My robes, Vanstone, my robes; they are being prepared?"

Roderick Vanstone nodded.

"The tailors are at them day and night. They will be magnificent. So will your equipage."

"Ah! that's most important."

"Quite so. Well, what do you say to Polar bear-skins as horse-rugs. I have dispatched a party to the North Pole to obtain them."

The strangely-bright eyes of the poor demented man rolled more than ever with delight.

"Admirable, Vanstone," he said, "admirable. You are a faithful servant. I must do something for you. Wait for my year of office, Vanstone, wait for my year of office."

He walked, still with that curious pomposity of manner, towards the door as he spoke, and intimated his intention of going into the grounds. Mr. Vanstone bowed with mock veneration. The door closed behind the maniac.

Roderick Vanstone looked at his son and smiled. "There's not much doubt about him," he said, "he's as mad as a March hare."

Stephen Vanstone nodded in acquiescence. "How like——" he said, and nodded again with a significance that finished his sentence.

"Wonderful, isn't it?" exclaimed the elder man; "more wonderful every day."

There was a silence for a minute; then Stephen spoke again:

"I've been wondering, father," he said, "what we should do if Nina Penhurst should request to see Cordelvin."

"It's scarcely likely she will," the other retorted; "there was very little love lost between her and Anthony when she lived here, you must remember. You know how he used to storm at her and revile her, and how she used to fly from his presence with fear in her eyes. No; it's scarcely likely that she'll ever come."

"But supposing she should turn up?"

"Well, if she insisted on seeing him, we should have to allow her for appearance sake. I should explain to her that his mind had weakened considerably lately, that Cordelvin is far more mad than he used to be, and, well, since she saw him, she'd find that such was the case, wouldn't she? Ha! ha! ha!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" echoed the son. "She would indeed, father. Why, she'd hardly recognise him, would she, and of course he's too mad now to recognise her. Ha! ha! ha!"

His hilarity was checked by his father's warning finger.

"I hope the girl doesn't come bothering here, nevertheless," said Roderick Vanstone, "because she might cause trouble. She might, as a relative, agitate for his

removal to an asylum. That would be decidedly awkward." He paused a moment, and then continued:

"You see, supposing she did that, and supposing the law decided that Cordelvin is *non compos mentis*, it would probably result in some new arrangement regarding the administration of the estate. We don't want that, do we?"

"No, indeed!" replied the other, with more feeling than he had previously displayed.

"Accordingly," pursued the elder man, "we must hope that the girl won't trouble us. If she does, I must think out what is the best thing to do."

The younger man's face took on itself a downcast look.

"It seems to me," he said, "that we are skating on pretty thin ice."

"H'm!" was the other's only retort, "the more reason, then, to avoid clumsiness in our actions."

CHAPTER XV.

The Face of a Dead Man.

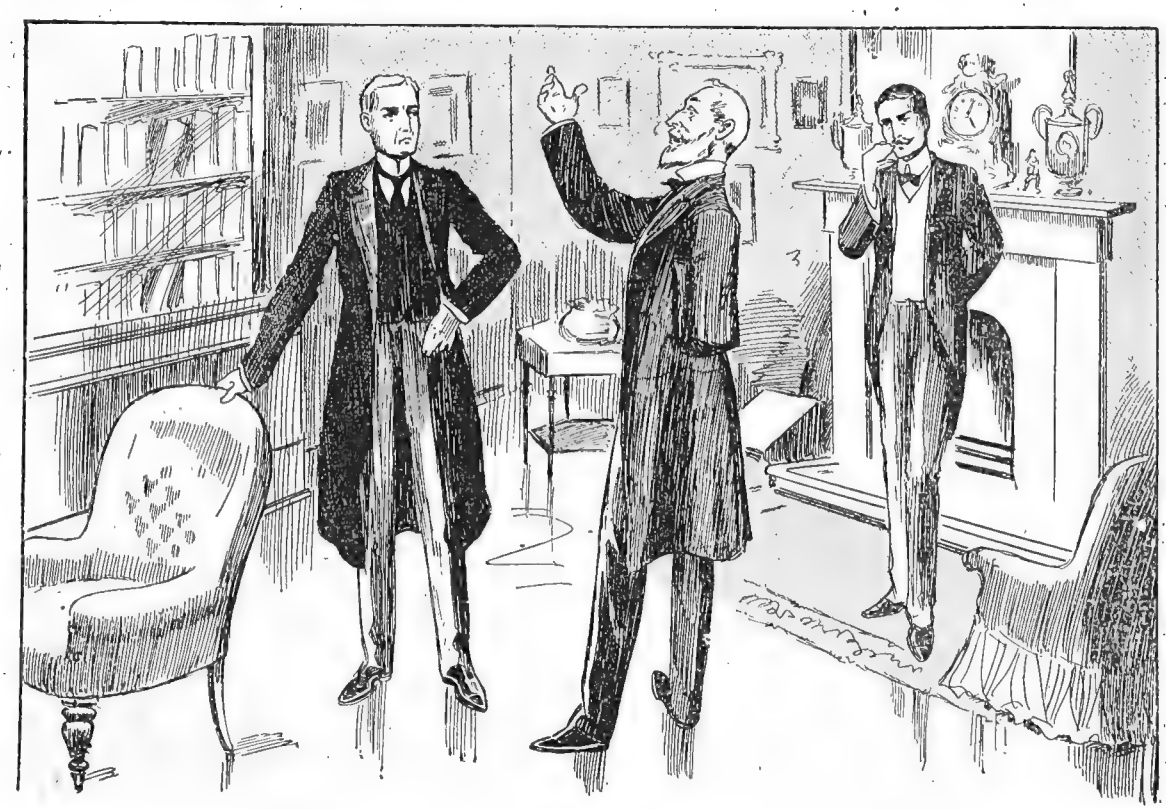
The morning passed in a bright blaze of January sunshine; luncheon was over, and now, in the afternoon, Mr. Cordelvin was once more breathing the fresh air of the grounds.

Very considerate of Mr. Cordelvin's health was Mr. Vanstone, very considerate indeed. The best of nourishment he always provided him with, and twice a day, morning and afternoon, unless the weather were altogether unpropitious, he insisted on the poor demented creature's walking in the garden. The care and solicitude which Mr. Roderick Vanstone exercised, were touching in the extreme, and it would be ungenerous to suggest that they were prompted by the fact that upon the duration of Mr. Cordelvin's life depended Mr. Vanstone's present position as administrator of the estate. Invariably, Mr. Cordelvin was accompanied—or not so much accompanied as kept in view—by either Stebbings or Burge. In the morning Stebbings had been the watch-dog; this afternoon it was Burge.

Both were faithful servitors according to their lights; but Burge had a weakness, which weakness consisted of running, whenever, in the course of the day he could get the chance, out of the grounds to the public-house at the corner of the next road. Seeing such an opportunity as he longed for, in the circumstance that Mr. Cordelvin had quietly sat himself upon a seat, from which he was gazing with the closest of interest at the house which he had recently quitted, Burge seized it, and in a trice was out of the grounds through a little side gate.

The winter sun was beginning to sink. Already it had stolen away from the house, leaving it somewhat in shadow. To the erratic fancy of Mr. Cordelvin as he sat looking upon the building, it assumed the shape and nature of the place which he had fully persuaded himself he was to occupy in a few months—the Mansion House. Dimly it occurred to him that there was something wrong. Even to his distorted memory it appeared that there ought to be steps and pillars. He approached the house with a vague idea of verifying these shortcomings. And then something caught his eye! He was at the back of the house, all the windows of which were opened to the light, except two.

That struck him as curious. Why were these two



"Thanks, Vanstone! Mr. Anthony *now*," he said with a slight upward wave of his hand, "*My Lord*, next year."

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windows different from the rest? Curiosity is just as pronounced in the insane mind as in the sane; perhaps more so. And when Mr. Cordelvin began to wonder about the windows, he at once also began casting about for a means to find out. A short ladder over near the stable caught his eye. The idea of fetching it and planting it against the window was no sooner thought of than it was carried out. There was about a foot of window-space apparent over the top of the shutters.

Mr. Cordelvin mounted the ladder, halted when he was in line with the visible glass, leant towards it, and peered in!

Ever since the morning, Gerald Mortimer had been alone in his prison-room, save for a few minutes when Stebbings and Burge had brought him in his mid-day meal. At that meal, at which reigned the same watchful conditions on the part of the armed Stebbings as had prevailed at breakfast, he had essayed no more inquiries regarding the inmates of the house. He had no desire now for converse with his gaolers. All he wanted, in his present state, was to be alone, alone with his thoughts.

Gloomy enough those thoughts had been in all conscience. Over and over again he had passed in review every circumstance, important and trivial, of the past exciting days. From that encounter with the strange woman near the asylum, he had traced the whole of his recent history right up to its present point. His proposal to Nina amid the castle ruins; the sudden cry of his young brother; the discovery of the body. Then had come Nina's flight; her letters; his journey to London; his manifold inquiries ere he had succeeded in tracing her to Roehampton; the dramatic scene near the lake on Wimbledon Common; his arrival just in the nick of time; and then, blessed memory! that blissful hour which he had spent by her side. Every little detail of his sojourn with her yesterday he recalled; every word, every look, every gesture. He had won from her a declaration of her love for him, and his heart throbbed and his blood pulsed through his veins at the recollection. Then, when he recalled his present position, he shivered at the vivid contrast.

What was to happen to him? What would happen to his darling? Nina, of course, could clear herself of the vile suspicions which had been heaped up against her, but he shuddered as he thought of the pain she must endure by the explanations of her conduct which she would, perforce, have to give, in order to set herself right in the eyes of the world. How much of this pain he might have saved her, had he been free! Why wasn't he free? Why was he captive here in the house of unscrupulous and criminal men? The thought heated his blood and sent it in a boil over his brain. He tugged at the cords which confined his wrists, and rolled over on his bed.

What was that? A sound on the wall, surely! It was something like a scraping, that lasted only for a second or two. He listened, and then a movement drew his eye to the window. His breath caught in his throat as he caught sight of two or three rungs of a ladder. He watched and listened intently. Five seconds later and he was gazing in mute amazement at a face, a human face!

As he looked, his eyes fixed, his limbs incapable of movement, it burst upon him with dazing force that he had seen that lank, maniacal face before. Yes, yes—he had seen it. It was a face he could never forget—never; and those eyes, like moving specks of fire, could they ever be obliterated from memory?

But where had he seen them?

"Oh, Heaven help me!"

The words rose up to his lips involuntarily. For in that moment, he remembered. The face before him was the face of a dead man; the face of the murdered Felix Cordelvin whom he had discovered! But the eyes—they were not his; they were the eyes of the mysterious woman he had met, the eyes of the woman in the blue cloak!

(To be continued.)

RESULT OF "BRAIN GYMNASIUM," Nos. 61 to 66.

The prize of £1 1s. has been awarded this week to Mrs. E. Hart, of 3 Avenue Road, Leamington.

A pencil-case has been sent to each of the following:

Miss S. Murphy, Birr, King's Co.; H. Daws, 7 Hampden Terrace, Lockwood Street, Hull; C. Annear, 53 Pursers Cross Road, Fulham; M. W. Daws, 7 Hampden Terrace, Lockwood Street, Hull; A. H. Scales, 51 Hormead Road, Paddington; Miss D. Ryan, 21 Abbots Road, East Ham; J. S. Ryan, 21 Abbots Road, East Ham; Mrs. Solly, 21 Abbots Park Road, Upton Park; J. Solly, 21 Abbots Park Road, Upton Park; H. Houston, 21 Abbots Road, East Ham.

SOLUTIONS.

61. A little pot is soon hot.

62. SLATE
STEAL
TALES
STALE

63. A V.C. for a C.I.V.

64.
C	ardif	F
O	rt	A
R	osse	L
N	ottingha	M
W	aterlo	O
A	njo	U
L	owestof	T
L	eit	H

65. GIRL-HOOD.

66. THAT
HYPO
APER
TORONTO
NAIL
TILL
OLLA

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At all booksellers, newsagents, and railway bookstalls.

Storyettes

So Would He.

"MERCY!" cried Juliet. "This glove is tight." "I, too, should be intoxicated," rapturously responded Romeo, "were I a glove on that hand."

The Wrong Term.

YOUNG MOTHER: "He is somewhat cross to-day. He is teething." Old Bachelor (in great awe of the mite of humanity): "And when do you expect him to commence—er—hairing?"

A Place of Safety.

"WHATEVER are you doing right on the top of that tree, Mike? Don't you see that it's being cut down?" Mike: "Yes, your honour; the last toime ye had a tree cut down it foll on the top of me, and, begorra, Oi'll be safe this time."

Couldn't Catch Anything.

THE small boy who applied to the physician to be vaccinated was so bright-faced that the doctor asked him who he was. "I'm Johnnie Smith," he said, "pa's a detective." "Oh," exclaimed the doctor; "run along, little boy: there's no need to vaccinate you; you'll never catch anything."

They Needed Washing.

MR. SWIPER (the well-known boatman and tale-slinger of Muckling-on-Slush): "Rough, sir. This ain't rough. Ah, I've seen the tide come up and wash every house in the High Street." Unromantic Tourist (with a lively remembrance of his present apartments): "Well, it wouldn't hurt if it came up and washed 'em again."

They Were Naturally Efficient.

VISITOR: "You have a remarkably efficient Board of Health in this town." Shrewd Native (one of many): "You are right about that, I can tell you." "Composed of scientists, I presume?" "No, sir. Scientists are too theoretical." "Physicians, perhaps?" "No. We don't allow doctors on our Board of Health—no, sir, nor undertakers, either." "Hum! What sort of men have you chosen, then?" "Life insurance agents."

Why He Gave a Present.

"So you gave your sister a beautiful birthday present, did you, Tommy?" "Yes; I always gives Susie a present on her birthday, 'cause mine comes a week after hers."

Willie Knew Fractions.

MAMMA: "How many sisters did your new playmate tell you he had?" Willie: "He's got one. He tried to catch me by saying he had two half-sisters, but he'll find out I've learnt fractions."

Wise Heads on Young Shoulders.

"I KNOW why the doctor brought that little baby," said a five-year-old the other day to her happy mother. "And why did the doctor bring the baby?" was asked. "'Cause it cries so much he didn't want to keep it himself," was the reply.

They Were Naturally Good.

"YOU have very fine teeth," remarked the dentist to the young woman in the chair. "Thank you," she responded. "I suppose they are inherited? Parents' teeth good?" inquired the dentist. "Father and mother both have full sets and not a decayed tooth in their heads, and they are past sixty-five, too," she said proudly. "That's remarkable," exclaimed the dentist. "Oh, I don't know about that," smiled the girl till her own string of pearls glittered in the light; "false teeth don't usually decay, do they?"

Catching the Ladies.

"HERE y'are now; two packages for twopence!" yelled a seedy-looking envelope-dealer in Holborn. "Here y'are, this way; two packages for a penny!" howled another envelope dealer, almost hustling his fellow-merchant off the pavement. Women out shopping noted the difference in prices, and soon bought out the two-for-a-penny man. Then both pedlars drifted round the corner, and the one who had sold no envelopes divided his stock with the other, remarking with a chuckle: "It works bee-utifully, old pal, don't it?"

She Spoke From Experience.

FOND MOTHER: "Now look here, George! I want you to break off with that girl. She is very pretty and all that; but I know her too well to want you to risk your life and happiness by marrying her. Why, she knows no more about housekeeping than I do about Greek—not a bit!" George: "Perhaps not; but she can learn." Mother: "After marriage is rather late for that, George." George: "But you said yourself that you did not know a thing about housekeeping until after you were married." Mother: "Very true, George—and your poor father died of dyspepsia twenty years ago."

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WITH the approach of Spring everyone begins to have a run down, and out of sorts feeling. This debilitated condition arises in this way. Winter with its wet and cold seeks out all the weak spots and leaves the blood charged with impurities, the bowels clogged, and the liver sluggish. Few people escape from these spring-time sufferings, and many are the little ills which make this season of the year a time of sickness and ill-health. There is only one way to remedy this condition. The whole system requires toning up, the diet regulated, and the digestive organs put into thorough working order. Bile Beans for Biliousness have proved themselves by long experience to be the very best specific for this purpose. They act in a gentle manner, give tone to the digestive organs, renovate the nervous system, enabling you to enjoy fully the welcome Spring weather.

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"Yes," interposed Bessie, whose bright sparkling eyes and clear complexion now denote perfect health, "I was so bad that I never liked to be seen in public. My face was completely disfigured, my mouth was drawn all on one side. The flesh was lumpy and discoloured. The pimples enlarged and burst like gatherings, causing fearful pain. More than once I have been in such agony that I have fainted away. Often I have been unable to hold myself up; so weak and sickly did I become. I had only a poor appetite, and felt disinclined to go in for exercise. It was an utterly wretched feeling that overwhelmed me. No one can really understand the acute nature of my case."

"What was done to try and cure you?" asked the reporter.

"We had medicine supplied from a chemist," broke in Mrs. Denbury, "but Bessie's ailment was so serious that he could not do her the least good. We tried various measures, which were equally unavailing; and the case had apparently grown hopeless, when our attention was drawn to the fact that Bile Beans had been found extremely beneficial in like cases. Bessie sent for some, and was so relieved in general health by them that she obtained a larger supply. It was not very long before I noticed a remarkable improvement in her appearance. Little by little the swellings and blotches became less; the gatherings healed; and to day, so far from being troubled at all with pimples or any other disfigurements, her whole skin is absolutely clear. She also feels as different again in health and spirits. Her recovery is indeed a relief; and we have only Bile Beans to thank for it.

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THERE are people who are credulous in the matter of new remedies, and hasten at the first opportunity to justify their confidences.

Mr. Pilaster is such a man.

He recently read a statement in his agricultural paper that a pebble held in the mouth would very much modify the craving for thirst, and, as he was afraid to drink large quantities owing to his delicate digestion, he was glad he had heard of the plan, and determined to give it a trial.

He did so that afternoon, selecting a nice, smooth stone, and rubbing it clean on the flap of his coat.

Pretty soon he got back in the house, and was holding the pebble in his mouth, and thinking with tears of gratitude in his eyes of the man who made the discovery, when the minister of Pilaster's church, with two clerical friends who were staying with him, and a prominent lady member of the Khidghluv Mission Society, made a call.

Mrs. Pilaster showed them into the parlour, where Pilaster, with the pebble in his mouth, joined them.

After a few suitable and impressive remarks upon the weather, to which each one contributed something and heartily concurred with what had already been advanced, the subject of the Khidghluv Mission was brought up, and the conversation became quite animated on the part of the three clergymen and the lady visitor, while Mr. and Mrs. Pilaster attentively listened.

Mr. Pilaster was sitting on a chair—sitting on the very edge, so as not to injure it—and was staring in a mild and forgiving manner at the lady, when he suddenly experienced a tickling sensation within his nostril, and, wrinkling his nose to prevent it, he broke out into a gurgling noise, and the next instant his eyes protruded. He bounded from the chair, threw his arms in the air, dropped down on the floor, and immediately went rolling and kicking under the table, upsetting that article, and strewing the floor with books, visiting cards, and wax flowers.

Then he rolled over, and reared up, and pounded with his heels, and turned black in the face, and worked his hands, and threw out his arms.

The people were terribly frightened. Mrs. Pilaster and the members of the Khidghluv Mission screamed and wrung their hands, and tried to get out of the door.

One of the strange clergymen got behind the piano, and Pilaster's own minister, who had no doubt it was a case of hydrophobia, shrieked above the din:

"Don't be frightened, ladies; Heaven will protect us," and immediately crawled under the sofa.

The other strange clergyman was the only one to retain his presence of mind. He thought it was a fit, and, catching the unfortunate Pilaster by the slack of the nether garment as he evoluted about, he held him down, and rubbed the back of his head with an album.

Then he called his friend to help him, and both of them fell to rubbing the miserable man, and pounding his breast and shaking his head; and, in the meantime, Mrs. Pilaster got a pail of water, and poured it on his head and down his back.

And in the midst of these extraordinary exertions the pebble came up, and rolled on the carpet without being perceived, but Mr. Pilaster was too weak to tell them.

Then the three picked him up and carried him to his bed, and took off his clothes, and Pilaster's minister started after all the doctors he knew the names of. Mrs. Pilaster heated water, and the lady Khidghluver spread mustard plasters; and ten minutes later the wretched patient was steaming in a blanket, and smarting under the effects of the mustard.

Then the doctors commenced to arrive, and pretty soon there were seven of them in the room, and what they didn't know about the case would have been waste of time hunting up. The first doctor said it was something with a name an inch and a half long and nine joints.

Then the next man fetched up something with a name still longer, and he was followed by a doctor who had to sit down to pronounce his.

At this Mrs. Pilaster fainted dead away, and, when she came to, the seven doctors were calling each other names of twelve syllables, and the poor lady went off again.

By this time Mr. Pilaster had so far recovered as to regain his breath, and some of his strength, and bounding out of bed, with no clothing to speak of other than three mustard plasters, he at once put an entirely new aspect on the condition of affairs.

And, when Mrs. Pilaster recovered, and when the lady member of the Khidghluv recovered, which both of them did when they discovered that there was no one to assist them, they found the room emptied, and saw Mr. Pilaster scraping mustard from his leg, and howling in the most dismal manner describable. He is better now, we understand.

But he says ninety tons of rock cannot quench his thirst for the blood of the man who suggested that pebble.

E. W.

Know Your Lover's Character

by sending a specimen of his handwriting to *RANEE, 32 Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.*, inclosing six penny stamps and stamped addressed envelope.

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[I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

Marriage as Peacemaker.

WHEN girls marry is it not time they sank any old jealousies that may have marked their single career? This problem is suggested by "AMY," who has lately married and settled down in a neighbourhood where society is scarce. Among her neighbours is a family who had been at bitter enmity with hers in the past, owing to one of the girls having deliberately "run after" and captured a man who was supposed to be paying attention to one of "AMY'S" sisters. Now that "AMY" has married, should she let bygones be bygones, and resume the old relations with the family in question, and if so, how should she do it?

❦❦❦

I think, "AMY," it shows a very nice disposition indeed on your part to wish to be reconciled as you say. Why do you not write to the mother of the family a nice, chatty letter, recalling old times, and saying how pleased you would be to see any of the family if they would call. From the tone of the reply you could gauge whether the proposed reconciliation was mutual, and act accordingly. Did you say the other girls were married? If not, I fear, in spite of your good intentions, they would not be so very cordial to you. Your visiting might look just a little like a "crow," might it not? But you will know how to avoid giving that impression.

❦❦❦

Awkward Seventeen.

SEVENTEEN is a sweet age for girls, but at that period boys have far from a good time socially. Among my letters I find one from "ARTHUR," who writes to me in the most pathetic strain as to the suffering he undergoes at the hands of his lady relatives. The people who visit his family are either men much older than himself, or ladies. The men find him a nuisance when they wish to talk amongst themselves, and the ladies are continually hinting that they do not want him with them. So he is driven to wander about alone, snubbed at home and friendless elsewhere.

❦❦❦

I am very sorry for you, "ARTHUR," and think the way people treat youths of your age is quite abominable. Your relatives would be very well repaid if you were to make yourself scarce at all times, and, without getting into any mischief, let them think you are in some mysterious way enjoying a high old time on your own account. If they began to get suspicious, and sounded you on the matter, then would be the time for you to tell them that if they did not want you at home, there were plenty of others who did, which might bring them to treat you more considerately.

Don't worry about your position at present. In three years' time, if you progress nicely, you will find only too many people anxious to get you amongst them. Any kind of young man is very much in demand at present, when the species is found to be getting socially very rare. And after all, believe me, you do not miss much by not being wanted either by older men or ladies. The conversation of the former would not interest you much, and most certainly the latter would very much bore you. Try and strike out on your own.

❦❦❦

"People Would Talk."

How great an influence this little phrase exercises on the love affairs of scores of people! Here is "EBOR," who is in the way of being thwarted in his affection for a girl, solely because of her fear of people talking. He is staying in her mother's house as a boarder, and while there has fallen in love with her. He proposed, but she would not accept as "people would talk." Her mother takes the same view, and will not hear of an engagement while he is at their house.

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How should he act? I should advise "EBOR" to allow matters to stand in abeyance for a month or so. Then in the friendliest way he should announce that he would have to leave the establishment, citing family, business, or other reasons. At the same time, he should let it be understood that he wished to continue the acquaintanceship as long as possible. After a month or so he should call, and, in an independent capacity, declare his love for the girl and ask her acceptance. But I really think the idea both of the girl and her mother that people would think their engagement the subject for scandal is at best very far fetched.

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His Friend's Sweetheart.

So, "JACKEY," you have fallen in love, or think you have, with the girl who is engaged to your oldest friend. You think she is fonder of you than of him, and ask my advice as to how to proceed. I think you should forget all about the matter, and banish from your mind any idea of stealing a friend's sweetheart. Probably he is very fond of her, and quite possibly your supposition that she prefers you has no real foundation. All is fair in love and war, you say, and I agree with you. When a state of love and war actually exists, all certainly is fair.

❦❦❦

But before the declaration of either, all is not fair and the relations of states and individuals proceed on ordinary lines. There is no state of love existing between yourself and your friend's sweetheart, and therefore your duty to your friend, if you have a proper sense of friendship, is to keep off his preserves. Many a man has killed an imagined fascination at birth rather than let it develop to the detriment of honour. And I advise you to do the same.

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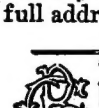

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